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THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

EDMUND LESTER PEARSON



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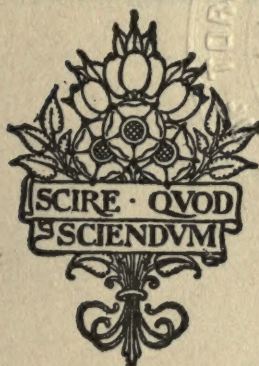
THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

THE
LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

BY

EDMUND LESTER PEARSON

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD LIBRARIAN'S ALMANACK"
"THE LIBRARY AND THE LIBRARIAN"



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TO MY MOTHER

TO THE HONORABLE

To the generosity of the Editors of the *Boston Evening Transcript* I am indebted for permission to use twelve of these papers. They have appeared in "The Librarian" department of the *Transcript*. "The Crowded Hour" and "Mulch" are printed here for the first time.

E. L. P.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

SINCE the publication of the first edition of this book two or three readers have pointed out that it needs an index. By the addition of an index, they say, its value as a work of reference would become almost wholly negligible. Impressed by the force of their remarks, I employed expert aid, and the index now printed at the end of the volume is the result. It was prepared by Miss Narcissa Bloom, an honor graduate of the Philander Library School, and it may therefore be relied upon as the flower of modern library science.

E. L. P.

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THE INTEREST GAUGE

THE INTEREST GAUGE

“WE are thinking of calling them ‘interest gauges,’ ” said the agent, “but perhaps you can suggest a better name.”

I took one of the little instruments and examined it. Hardly over an inch long, with its glass tube and scale, it resembled a tiny thermometer. The figures and letters were so small that I could not make them out, though they became clear enough through a reading-glass.

“Interest gauges,” I remarked, “sounds like something connected with banks. I should think you could find a better name. Who invented them?”

The agent looked important.

“They were invented,” he explained, “by Professor Dufunnie, the great psychologist. They are a practical application

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of psychology. Let me show you how they are used. Allow me — I will take this book — the ‘Letters of Junius,’ and attach the interest gauge. Here in the back, you see, the gauge is invisible to the reader. You will notice now, if you look through the glass, that the gauge marks zero. No one is reading the book, we have not even opened it, and the human mind is not acting upon the book. If you will take it into your hand, and look down at the gauge through the glass, you will see probably some little agitation of the liquid within the tube. You do, do you not? I thought so. That is because you are probably already familiar, to some extent, with the ‘Letters of Junius’ and the recollections that they arouse in your mind are exerting themselves upon the fluid. Now, if you will oblige me, open the book and read attentively for a few moments.”

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I did so, and then handed it back to the agent.

“Look,” he cried, “as soon as you cease reading, the fluid sinks back to zero. But the little aluminum arrow remains at the highest point which the fluid reached — that is, the highest point of interest which you felt in the book. Ah, yes — 40 degrees — a faint interest. You will notice that the degree-points are marked at intervals with descriptive phrases — 40 is ‘faint interest,’ 30 is ‘indifference,’ 20 is ‘would not keep you awake after 9 P. M.,’ and so on.”

The thing was very fascinating.

“It is astounding,” I said, “for that is exactly my feeling towards Junius, and yet I tried to get more interested in him than usual.”

The agent laughed.

“You can’t fool the gauges,” he said.

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“ You can’t do it, even when you know one is attached to your book. I need not say that it is absolutely correct when the reader is not aware that there is a gauge upon his book. You must see the value of these to a librarian. Let me show you how incorruptible they are. Have you something there in which you have absolutely no interest — some book or article that is dry as dust? ”

I looked about.

“ This pretty nearly fills the bill,” I said, and I handed him a copy of a library magazine with an article by Dr. Oscar Gustafsen on “ How to Make the Workingman Read the Greek Tragedies.”

The agent attached an interest gauge, and told me to read Dr. Gustafsen’s article, and to try as hard as I could to become interested; to pretend, if I could not feel, the greatest excitement over it. I did so, and

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strained every muscle in my brain, so to speak, to find something in it to interest or attract me. It was no use — the fluid gave a few convulsive wabbles, but at the end the little arrow had not even reached 10, or “Bored to Death.”

Then the agent took a copy of “The Doctor’s Dilemma,” and putting an interest gauge on the volume, asked me to read a few pages, and to remain as indifferent as possible. I read it calmly enough, but the liquid in the tube mounted slow and sure, and when we examined the arrow it pointed to 80.

“Try it on this,” said the agent, handing me Conan Doyle’s “Round the Fire Stories.”

I put on an interest gauge and read the tale of “The Lost Special.” The arrow shot up to 98 before I had half finished the yarn.

“The highest that the gauge will record,

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you see, is 140, though we guarantee them to stand a pressure of 165. They are not often subjected to anything like that. The average novel or short story to-day does not put them under a very severe strain. The greatest risk we run is from authors reading their own books. We had an especially dangerous case the other day, during some tests in the laboratory. We had a young author reading the proofs of his first book, and we put on a high pressure scale, capable of recording up to 210, and even then we took off the gauge only just in time. It had reached the limit, and there were danger signs."

"What are danger signs?" I asked.

"The liquid begins to boil," he said, "and then you have to look out for trouble. Now how many of these will you take? I can let you have a trial dozen for \$4, or two dozen for \$7.50. Two dozen? Thank

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you. You attach them in the back of the book — so fashion — or if the book is bound with a loose back, then you put them down here. There is no danger of their being seen, in either case. Here is our card, we shall be very pleased to fill any further orders. Thank you. Good day!”

As soon as he had gone I left my office, and went out into the public part of the library. I had started for the reading-room, when I heard my name called. It was Professor Frugles, the well-known scientific historian. He is giving his course of lectures on “The Constitutional Development of Schleswig-Holstein” and I had attended one or two of them. They had already been going on for two months — and although he lectured four times a week, he had n’t progressed beyond the introduction and preliminaries. Both of the lec-

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tures I had heard were long wrangles in which the professor devoted his energies to proving that some writer on this subject (a German whose name I did not catch) was wholly untrustworthy. I was told by some of the most patient listeners that so far no single thing about Schleswig-Holstein itself had been mentioned, and that it did not appear to be in sight. The course consisted merely of Frugles' opinions of the authorities.

Now the professor came slowly toward me, wiping his face with a large red handkerchief and waving his cane.

"Got any new books?" he shouted.

I told him we had a few, and took him back into one of the workrooms. He examined them.

"This will do; I'll look this over," and he picked up something in German.

I offered him another — in English,

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and, as I thought, rather interesting in appearance.

“Pah!” he ejaculated, as if I had put some nauseous thing under his nose, “popular!”

He exploded this last word, which was his most violent term of condemnation, and ran through the rest of the books.

“Well, I’ll take this into the reading-room and look it through,” and he started with the German book.

I prevailed upon him to take the other as well, and he consented, with a grunt. He did not notice that I had slipped an interest gauge into both of them.

After a bit, I followed him into the reading-room. He was in a far corner, hard at work. Mrs. Cornelia Crumpet was engaged in conversation with Miss Bixby, the reference librarian, when I came in.

“Oh, here’s Mr. Edwards!” she ex-

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claimed. "Why, what a library you have! I can't find anything at all about the Flemish Renaissance and I do not know what I shall do, for I have to read a paper on it tomorrow afternoon before the Twenty-Minute Culture Club. Miss Bixby was just saying she would get me something. Now what would you advise? There is nothing at all in the books I looked at."

"Perhaps you looked in the wrong books," I suggested, observing that she had a copy of "Thelma" under her arm.

"Oh, Mr. Edwards, how ridiculous of you! I'm carrying this book home for the housemaid; she's sick in bed, and the cook said she was homesick and threatened to leave. So I said I would get her something to read to occupy her mind. This is fearful trash, I suppose, but I thought it would

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keep her contented until she got well. But I do wish you would tell me what to consult about the Flemish Renaissance."

"Mrs. Crumpet," I said, "Miss Bixby knows more about that subject in one minute than I do all day, and I advise you to let her prescribe."

Mrs. Crumpet agreed to wait, while Miss Bixby went for the books.

"Where's that copy of 'Thelma'? I put it down here. Oh, you have it, Mr. Edwards! Well, you had better let me take it; I'm sure it is too frivolous for you serious-minded librarians to read. I'll sit here and look it over until she comes back with those books."

She took it, interest gauge and all, and sat down.

Miss Larkin came into the room just then and asked me to come over to the children's department.

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"I want to show you," she said, "what an interest these children take in serious reading and non-fiction. It is most encouraging."

When we arrived at the children's room she had two or three small persons arranged about the desks.

"Now, Willie," she said, "which do you like best, story-books or nature books?"

Willie answered with great promptness: "Nacher books."

The others all confessed to an extraordinary fondness for "hist'ry" or "biography" or "nacher."

I asked Miss Larkin's leave to try a little experiment, and then explained to her the workings of the interest gauges. We chose Willie as a subject for our investigations, and gave him a copy of one of his beloved "nacher" books, with a guage attached. Five minutes' reading by Willie sent the

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arrow up to 30, but the same time on "The Crimson Sweater" sent it up to 110.

"He seems to like Mr. Barbour better than the Rev. Dr. Fakir, Miss Larkin — I'm afraid that his enthusiasm for 'nacher' is in accordance with what he knows will please you. Why don't you use your influence with him to lead him toward truthfulness? It's a better quality, even, than a fondness for non-fiction."

As I went back I met Professor Frugles.

"Let me have this, as soon as it is ready to go out," he said, brandishing the German work; "this other — trifling, sir, trifling!"

And away he went.

But I noticed that the German book had only sent the gauge up to forty, while the "trifling" work, which had caused him to express so much contempt, had registered seventy-five.

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At the issue desk was Mrs. Crumpet, having her books charged. As there were no gauges on the books about the Flemish Renaissance, I had no data to go on, except the fact that although she declared she had "skimmed through" them all and found them "very helpful," she had not, so far, cut any of the pages. I did not mention this to her, as she might have retorted that we ought to have cut them ourselves. Which was quite true.

But while she talked with Miss Carey, I managed to extract the gauge from "Thelma." At least, I took away the fragments of it. The arrow had gone up to 140, and trying to get still higher the little glass tube had been smashed to bits.

THE GARDENER'S GUIDE

THE GARDENER'S GUIDE

I WAS looking over the proof sheets for some Library of Congress catalogue cards when I observed the name of Bunkum — Mrs. Martha Matilda Bunkum was the full name, and I was further privileged to learn that she was born in 1851. Everyone knows Mrs. Bunkum's two great works: "Handy Hints for Hillside Gardens," and "Care and Cultivation of Crocuses." Now, it seemed, she had accumulated all her horticultural wisdom into one book, which was called "The Gardener's Guide, or a Vade Mecum of Useful Information for Amateur Gardeners, by Martha Matilda Bunkum." The Library of Congress card went on to say that the book was published in New York, by the

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well-known firm of Ponsonby, Perks & Co., in the year 1911. It brought tears to my eyes, recalling the days when I, too, was a cataloguer, to see that the book had “xiv, 7, xv, 27, 316 p., illus., plates.”, and moreover was 19 centimeters high.

As soon as I had recovered from my emotion, I pressed the electric bell three times — a signal that brings Miss Anderson, the head of the order department, into my office, unless she happens to be arranging her hair before the mirror in the stack-room at the moment. This time she came promptly.

“Miss Anderson,” I said, “we must get a copy of Mrs. Bunkum’s ‘Gardener’s Guide.’ ”

She instantly looked intelligent and replied, “We have one here now, on approval; it came in from Malkan this morning,” and she hurried out to get it.

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When I had the book, I regarded it lovingly.

"I wish I knew what the 'A. L. A. Book List' says about this," I pondered.

"It will be along in a couple of months," said Miss Anderson, "and then we can find out."

I told Miss Anderson to keep the book, anyhow, and to have this copy charged to my private account.

That night, on the way home, I expended \$1.65 for flower seeds. They were all put up in attractive little envelopes, with the most gorgeous pictures on the front, representing blossoms of tropical splendor. On the backs was a great deal of information, as well as Latin names, confident prediction of what a dazzling mass of bloom the little packets would bring forth, and warnings "not to plant these seeds deeper than one-sixteenth of an inch."

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All but the sunflowers. I could not get any sunflower seeds in packets, and finally had to get them in a paper bag — an enormous lot of them, for five cents. But there were no pictures, and no directions about depth. All this, I reflected, would be forthcoming from the pages of Mrs. Bunkum.

On the following evening, in company with Jane, I went forth to sow. Jane had the “Gardener’s Guide” and I took certain tools and implements. By the time I had a trench excavated a little shower came up, and Jane retreated to the veranda. I had on old clothes and did n’t mind.

“Jane!” I called, “look up Mrs. Bunkum and see how deep to plant sunflower seeds.”

All the directions on the little packets were so precise about depths — some seeds an inch, some half an inch, and some (the

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poppies, for instance) only a sixteenth of an inch below the surface — that I was tremendously impressed with the importance of it all. Previously, I had thought you just stuck seeds in any old way.

But the rain was coming down harder now, and my spectacles were getting blurred. Jane seemed to be lost in admiration of the frontispiece to the “Gardener’s Guide.”

She began to turn the leaves of the index rapidly, and I could hear her mutter: “Q, R, S — here it is. Scrap-book, screens, slugs, sowing, spider on box. Oh, I hate spiders! Sunbonnet, sun-dial, sweet peas. Why, there is n’t anything about sunflowers!”

This annoyed me very much.

“Jane,” I said, “how perfectly absurd! Do you suppose an authority like Mrs. Bunkum would write a book on gardening,

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and not mention such common things as sunflowers? Look again.”

She did so, but presently shouted back: “Well, I don’t care! It goes right from sun-dial to sweet peas, and then Sweet William, and then to the T’s — Tigrinum and Tobacco Water. I don’t see what this ‘Sunbonnet’ means, do you? Perhaps it’s a misprint for sunflower. I’ll look it up — page 199.”

Presently Jane found the reference she was hunting, and read it to me, leaning out over the rail of the veranda.

“Unless a woman possesses a skin impervious to wind and sun, she is apt to come through the summer looking as red and brown as an Indian; and if one is often out in the glare, about the only head-gear that can be worn to prevent this, is the old-fashioned sunbonnet. With its poke before and cape behind, protecting

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the neck, one really cannot become sunburned, and pink ones are not so bad. Retired behind its friendly shelter, you are somewhat deaf to the world; and at the distant house, people may shout to you and bells be rung at you, and, if your occupation be engrossing, the excuse 'no one can hear through a sunbonnet' must be accepted."

Jane read this with the liveliest interest, and at its conclusion remarked: "I believe I'll get a blue one, in spite of her!"

I sneezed two or three times at this point, and asked her to try again for sunflowers.

"Look here," I suggested, "I've noticed that index. Perhaps sunflowers are entered under their class as hardy annuals, or biennials, or periodicals, or whatever they are. Look 'em up that way."

She did so.

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“Nothing under ‘Hardy annuals,’” she announced, “except ‘hardy roses’; under ‘Biennials’ it says ‘see also names of flowers.’”

This made her laugh and say: “Here’s a librarian getting a taste of his own medicine. No, it gives a reference to page 117. Here it is: ‘There are but few hardy biennials. The important ones, which no garden should be without, are: *Digitalis*, and *Campanula Medium*.’ Why, I thought *Digitalis* was something you put in your eye!”

“Did you look under ‘periodicals’?” I retorted. “I could put something in *her* eye! Did you look under ‘periodicals’?”

Jane referred again to the index.

“There is n’t any such thing,” she said presently; “don’t you mean perennials? Here’s a lot about them. Oh, yes, and a list of them, too. Now, let me see—

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Aquilegia, *Dianthus barbatus*, *Dicentra spectabilis* — gracious! do you suppose any of those are sunflowers? ”

I groaned.

“Would you mind getting me a rain-coat? I'm afraid these seeds will sprout in my hand in a few minutes, if we don't get some information soon.”

Jane went into the house, but returned in about five minutes with an umbrella.

“Your rain-coat is n't here,” she said, “you left it at the library that day that it cleared during the afternoon. I will send Amanda out with this umbrella.”

“Do so by all means,” I replied, “as I have only two hands occupied with the trowel and the sunflower seeds it will be a pleasure to balance an umbrella as well.”

But Jane did not notice the sarcasm, and presently Amanda tiptoed out through the wet grass with the umbrella. I was

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left trying to hold it, and wondering how Mrs. Bunkum acted in a crisis like this. But of course she never got caught in one. She would know right off the bat just how deep to put the seeds. At any rate, Jane's researches among the *Aquilegias* had given me an idea.

"Look here," I called, "Mrs. Bunkum is so confounded classical or scientific, or whatever it is, that I believe she scorns to use such a vulgar word as sunflower. She's probably put it under its scientific name."

Jane looked as though the last difficulty had been removed.

"What would the scientific name be?" she inquired.

"I am trying to think, as well as I can, standing in this puddle." I was sparring for time. "It would be *helio* something, I suppose," I added.

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"Heliotrope, of course!" exclaimed Jane, with a glad chortle. "Here they are; all about them!"

"No! no! no!" I shouted, "I do wish you wouldn't jump at conclusions so. Heliotrope means a flower that turns around to follow the sun."

"Well," she said, "I thought sunflowers did that."

"So they do," I told her, "but heliotropes are little blue things, as you very well know—or ought to. Now, you go to the telephone, and call up the library, and ask for Miss Fairfax. She is in the reference room now, or ought to be."

There was a pause, while I could hear Jane at the telephone.

"North, double six three, please. No, double six three. Yes. Hello! Hello! Is this the library? Yes, the library. Yes; is Miss Fairfax there? Ask her to

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come to the 'phone, please. I said, ask her to come to the 'phone. Is that Miss Fairfax? Oh, Miss Fairfax, this is Mrs. Edwards. Mr. Edwards wants you to go as quickly as possible to the reference room and look up the scientific name for sunflowers. He says, look it up in Bailey. Do you understand? What? What? No, I said the scientific name for sunflowers, you know, s-u-n-f-l-o-w-e-r-s. The tall things with yellow petals and brown centers. *Sunflowers!!!* What? Who is this talking? Is this Miss Fairfax? What, isn't this the Public Library? What? Well, where is it, then? Henderson's glue factory? Oh, pardon me! I thought it was the Public Library. Central gave me the wrong number. . . . Hello, is this central? Well, you gave me the wrong number; you gave me North double six two. I want North double six

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three — the Public Library. Yes, please. Hello, is this the Public Library? Yes; who is this speaking, please? Oh, Miss Anderson? Is that you? This is Mrs. Edwards, yes. What are you staying so late for? You are? Well, I shall speak to Mr. Edwards about it. It is perfectly ridiculous to have you working overtime night after night, and all for that foolish exhibition, too. I know these librarians; if they would have the courage not to try to do so much when the city is so stingy about giving them assistants! Well, you go right home now and get your dinner. The idea! What? You have accessioned two hundred books this afternoon? If Mr. Edwards does n't stop that, I shall, that's all. Oh, you have saved me out a copy of 'The Chaperone.' How nice of you! No, I certainly do not. I did n't like 'Cora Kirby' very much, and 'The Players' was

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horrid! But I did want to see what this was like — it has been very favorably criticised. What? Oh, give it to Mr. Edwards to-morrow night, put it in his bag, at the bottom; he'll never notice it. I hope there are not any more of you there! Oh, Miss Tyler and Miss Hancock, out at the desk, of course, and who? Miss Fairfax? Dear me, that reminds me. Mr. Edwards wants Miss Fairfax to look up something for him. Goodness, I forgot all about it! He is standing out there in all this rain with an umbrella in one hand, a trowel in the other, and a package of sunflower seeds in the other. He'll be furious! Do go and get Miss Fairfax to come to the 'phone right away. Yes, to come to the 'phone. . . . What's that? Is that central? No, please hold the line; I have n't finished yet. . . . Is that you, Miss Fairfax? What? Oh, Miss Anderson? What?

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Miss Fairfax has gone to her supper? What on earth shall I do? Who is in the reference room? David? Who's he? Oh, that new page. . . . David, Mr. Edwards wants you to look up the scientific name for sunflowers; look it up in Bailey, David. What? Bailey who? I don't know. Ask some of them there. . . . Oh, well, wait a minute. Hold the line . . .

"Sam!" And she came out to the veranda again. "Sam, what Bailey is it they are to look it up in?"

"Liberty Hyde," I yelled. "Cyclopædia of American Horticulture! But any dictionary will probably do. And, for the love of Mike, get a move on! I'm drowned, paralyzed! I'll have rheumatism for a week!"

But she was already back at the telephone.

"David, are you there? Mr. Edwards

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says it's Liberty Hyde Bailey's Cyclopædia of Horticulture. And you are to hurry, hurry! What is that? You don't know where it is? Well, look it up in the catalogue. . . . Oh, ask Miss Anderson to come back. . . . Is that you, Miss Anderson? Will you look it up, please? Yes, the scientific name for sunflowers. In Freedom Bailey's Cyclopædia of Agriculture, or any dictionary. . . . Did you find it? Yes? What? Spell it. Oh, *Helianthus*. Thank you so much! Good-by! And don't forget to send 'The Chaperone' home by Mr. Edwards tomorrow night. Thank you for keeping me a copy. Good-by. . . ."

She came back to the veranda.

"I've got it at last, Sam. It's *Helianthus*. Where's Mrs. Bunkum? Oh, I left her in the study. Just wait a minute, now. . . . Yes, here it is, *Helianthus*, sure

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enough. How silly! Why does n't she call 'em sunflowers? There, page 189. This is what Mrs. Bunkum says: 'The *Helianthus Grandiflora*, or common sunflower, is one of the most attractive and satisfactory of the perennials. Nothing is so suitable to place against a wall, or to employ to cover a shed or any other unattractive feature of the landscape. The stalks grow sometimes as high as eight to ten feet and bloom from July to September. It is well not to plant *Delphiniums* too near the *Helianthus*, as the shade from the former is too intense and it would not do to risk spoiling the lovely blossoms of the *Delphinium*. The latter . . . why!" broke out Jane, "she goes on about *Delphiniums* now, and does n't tell any more about sunflowers!"

"Do you mean to say," I asked — and there was a hard, steely ring in my voice,

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“do you mean to say that Mrs. Bunkum does not tell how deep I am to plant these cussed seeds?”

Jane was about to laugh or to cry — I am not sure which.

“Not a word more than what I read,” she answered.

“Jane,” I said solemnly and firmly, “go into the house. What is going to happen is not a fit sight for your eyes. Praise be, that book is mine, and not the library’s, and I can deal with it justly. Give it here. And if you have any affection for Martha Matilda Bunkum, kiss her good-by. I do not know how deep these seeds go, but I know how deep she goes.” And I began to dig a suitable hole.

I rejoined my wife at dinner after a bath and certain life-saving remedies.

“Milton uttered curses on him who de-

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stroyed a good book, but what do you think will come up in ground fertilized by Mrs. Bunkum?" I asked.

Jane giggled.

"I do not know," she said, "but if you erect a tombstone to her, I can suggest an epitaph."

"What is it?" I questioned.

"The Gardeners Guyed," said Jane.

VANISHING FAVORITES

VANISHING FAVORITES

IT is nearly twelve months since anyone has lamented the disappearance of our old favorite characters of fiction. While these expressions of sorrow are undoubtedly sincere, they are seldom practical. No one, for instance, has ever suggested any method for the perpetuation of the heroes and villains of the old plays and romances. No one has urged that when the government subsidizes authors, and pensions poets, a sum shall be set aside for such writers as will agree to stick to the old-fashioned characters. Yet it would prove effective.

Of its desirability nothing need be said.

It is no answer to those who regret the passing of their old friends to say that they can still be found in the old books. That

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is like sending to a museum to view dried bones, some person who yearns to behold the ichthyosaurus splashing among the waves, or the pterodactyl soaring overhead. Indeed, the cases are similar for more than one reason. How greatly would the joy of life increase if we only had a few extinct animals left! The African hunter returns with an assortment of hippopotamuses, elephants, and jujub birds. It would be more delightful if he could also fetch the mighty glyptodon, the terrible dinotherium, and the stately bandersnatch.

There are few of the old characters of fiction more generally missed than the retired colonel, home from India. He was usually rather portly in figure, though sometimes tall and thin. Always his face was the color of a boiled lobster, and his white moustache and eyebrows bristled

VANISHING FAVORITES

furiously. For forty years he had lived exclusively on curries, chutney, and brandy and soda, so his liver was not all it should be.

His temper had not sweetened. He was what you might call irritable.

During forty years he had been lord and master over a regiment of soldiers, and a village of natives, and he had the habit of command.

His favorite remark was: "Br-r-r-r!!"

That is as near as it can be reproduced in print, but from the manner in which his lips rolled when he delivered it, and the explosive force with which it ended, you could see that he had learned it from a Bengal tiger. His was an imposing presence, but his speaking part was not large. In fact, his only contributions to social intercourse were the exclamation which has been quoted, and one other.

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This sounded like "Yah!" but it was delivered with a rasping snarl which must be heard to be appreciated. Such was his manner toward his equals; toward servants and underlings he was not so agreeable. On the whole, there was reason to think that he was somehow related to the celebrated personage who "eats 'em alive," or to that other individual called Gritchfang, who "guzzled hot blood, and blew up with a bang."

The colonel was a genial and interesting old "party," and we lament his disappearance.

There was a turtle-dove to coo, however, in the same stories where the colonel roared. This was the dying maiden. She has not altogether left us—her final struggles are protracted. Her dissolution is expected at almost any moment now.

Her specialty was being wan.

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Come what might, at any hour of the day or night, under all circumstances, she was very, very wan. You could never catch her forgetting it. She reminded you of Bunthorne's injunction to the twenty lovesick maidens — she made you think of faint lilies.

Usually she lay on a couch in the drawing-room, but she could, with assistance, make her way to the window to wave her handkerchief to Cousin Harry departing to the war. She was in love with Cousin Harry, but knew that he cared most for proud, red-cheeked Sister Gladys. So she suffered in silence, and when Cousin Harry forged a few checks, she bought them up, and arranged a happy marriage between Harry and Gladys — who was in love with someone else.

This was so that she could be a martyr. She loved being a martyr, and was willing

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to make everyone else intensely uncomfortable in order to accomplish her object. She was very gentle and sweet, and even the Colonel would cease to bellow and snort in her presence.

The really learned heroine has gone for good. She is as rare as the megatherium. Her successors — the women who can discuss a little politics, or who know something about literature — are only collateral descendants. There is some doubt about even that degree of kinship. They are not the real things.

Our old friend had stockings of cerulean blue — though she would have died had she shown half an inch of one of them. Her idea of courtship was to get the hero in a woodland bower and then say something like this:

“ Perhaps you have never realized, Mr. Montmorency, how profoundly the phil-

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osophy of the Rosicrucians has affected modern thought in its ultimate conception of ontology. The epistemological sciences exhibit the effect of Thales' dictum concerning the fourth state of material cosmogony."

And Mr. Montmorency liked it, too. He had a reply all ready. He wondered if it really was Thales so much as Empedocles or Ctesias. She showed him that his suspicions were groundless. Thales was the man.

He gave up all idea of holding her hand, and listened to a fifteen-minute discourse on the Peripatetics.

After this kind of heroine, is it any wonder that we object to the bridge-playing ladies with a passion for alcohol, who are served to us by the novelist of to-day?

The learned heroine of the old books talked as no one can talk now, except, pos-

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sibly, a Radcliffe girl with a blue book in front of her, the clock pointing to a quarter of twelve, and a realization that a failure to get B minus in the exam. will make it impossible for her to secure a degree in three years.

The saintly children of the old fiction are perhaps the offspring of the learned heroine and Mr. Montmorency. Certainly such a marriage would result in children of no commonplace type. These, however, tend not so much to scholarship as to good behavior. They would get 98 in all their studies, but 100 plus in deportment.

They are too good to be true. They have enough piety to fit out a convocation of bishops, with a great deal left over. The little girls among them are addicted to the death-bed habit. Only they carry the matter further than the invalid heroine.

They actually die.

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The one thing worth living for, in their estimation, is to gather a group of weeping relatives and the minister about their beds on a beautiful morning in June, and then pass serenely away, uttering sentiments of such lofty morality that even the minister feels abashed. The pet lamb, the hoop, the golden curls and the pantalettes, which had been their accessories during seven years in the mortal vale, are cheerfully left behind for the joy of this solemn moment.

There ought to be no dispute over the statement that one other old-fashioned fictitious character is badly missed.

This is the family ghost.

The modern substitute for the real thing is like offering a seat in a trolley car to someone who has been used to a sedan chair. The modern ghost is a ready-made product of a psychological laboratory,

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and you know that his Bertillon measurements are filed away in a card-catalogue somewhere.

The old ghost used to groan and clank chains, and leave gouts of blood (gouts always — never drops) all over the place.

Or, if it were a lady ghost, she sighed sweetly and slipped out of your bedroom window to the moonlit balcony.

You could get along with ghosts like either of them. You knew what they were up to.

But the ghost of contemporary fiction is as obscure as Henry James. He is a kind of disembodied idea; he never groans, nor clanks chains; and you cannot be sure whether he is a ghost, or a psychological suggestion, or a slight attack of malarial fever. In nothing is the degeneracy and effeminacy of our literature more apparent than in its anæmic ghosts.

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Hashimura Togo says that "when a Negro janitor sees a ghost, he are a superstition; but when a college professor sees one, he are a scientific phenomenon." When that point has been reached with real ghosts, what can be expected of the fictitious ones?

Along with the family ghost disappeared the faithful old family servant. He was usually a man, and he looked like E. S. Willard as Cyrus Blenkarn. He dressed in snuff-colored clothes, and he bent over, swaying from side to side like a polar-bear in a cage. He rubbed his hands. But he was very devoted to the young mistress.

Lor' bless yer, Sir, he knew her mother, he did, when she was only that high. Carried her in his arms when she was a little babby. But he is afraid something is going wrong with the old place. He does n't like the looks of things, nohow.

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With the superhuman instinct granted to servants, but denied to their superiors, he has become suspicious of the villain on sight. It is lucky that no one believes the old servant, or they would pitch out the villain then and there, and the story would come to an end at Chapter II.

The utter chaos into which villains have fallen has been a cause for regretful comment for years past. Long ago it was pointed out that villains no longer employ direct and honorable methods like murder and assault. The sum of their criminal activities is a stock-market operation that ruins the hero.

Things have gone from bad to worse.

Now you cannot tell which is the villain and which the hero. The old, simple days when the villain, as Mr. J. K. Jerome said, was immediately recognized by the fact that he smoked a cigarette, have long

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since passed away. Now, the villain and hero in Chapter I. have usually changed places two or three times by the end of the book.

Let no one think that this complaint is made because we regret losing our admiration for the hero. We never had any. He was always such a chuckle-headed ninny that you longed to throw rocks at him from the start.

The lamentable thing is to see the villain falling steadily away from the paths of vice and crime, and taking up with one virtuous practice after another.

Meanwhile, the hero is making feeble efforts at villainy, which result, of course, in complete failure. You cannot learn to be a villain at Chapter XXIV. It is too late. Villains, like poets, are born, not made, and in the older books the faithful servant could tell you that the villain was

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bad from the cradle. Hereditary influence and unremitting attention to business are as necessary in the villain trade as in any other.

There is one other phase of the making of villains which deserves consideration. That is, their nationality.

Once you had only to know that the man who appeared at Chapter III., twirling his moustache and making polite speeches, was a French count or a Russian prince, to be sure that on him would fall the responsible post of chief villain during the rest of the story.

If the novel were written in America, an English lord could be added to the list. The titled foreigner, whatever he might be, was expected to try to elope with the heroine, for the sake of her money. The hero baffled him finally, and seized the opportunity, at the moment of baffle-

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ment, to deliver a few patriotic sentences on the general superiority of republican institutions.

This is all changed. We have had novels and plays with virtuous, even admirable, English lords. Once or twice members of the French nobility have appeared in another capacity than that of advance agent of wickedness. It is time to call a halt, or the first thing we know someone will write a book with a virtuous Russian prince in it.

The line must be drawn somewhere. The mission of Russia in English literature is to furnish tall, smooth, diabolical persons, devoted to vodka, absinthe, oppression of the peasantry, cultivation of a black beard, and general cussedness. We foresee that the novelists will soon have to draw upon Japan for their villains. Much ought to be made of a small,

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oily, smiling Oriental, who is nursing horrid plots beneath a courteous exterior.

At the time of the first performances of Mr. Moody's play "The Great Divide," it was pleasant to see that a sense of fitness in the nationality of villains had not entirely died out. It may be remembered that the first act represents an American man joining with a Mexican and a non-descript in an atrocious criminal enterprise. At least one newspaper had the sturdy patriotism to call the dramatist to account for insinuating that an American could possibly do such a thing.

"Furriners," perhaps, but Americans, never! Shame on you, Mr. Moody!

While so many of the chief characters of the old fiction have vanished, there is a chorus of minor ones who have also moved away.

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Where, for instance, is the village simpleton? He was a useful personage, for he could be depended upon to make the necessary heroic sacrifice in the last chapter but one. When the church steeple burst into flames, or the dam broke and the flood descended on the town, or the secondary villain was tying the heroine's mother to the railroad track, the hero was holding the center of the stage and seeing that the heroine escaped in safety.

But who was that slight figure climbing aloft in the lurid glare of the burning belfry, or swimming across the raging torrent, or running up to the bridge waving a red lantern? Who, indeed, but poor, despised Benny Bilkins, the village idiot? He fell with a crash when the steeple came down, or disappeared forever in the angry, swirling waters, or was ground under the wheels of the locomotive — but then there

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was a grave for the heroine to strew violets upon, in the last chapter.

The miser, too, has utterly disappeared. In facial characteristics he resembled the faithful old family servant, except that he had deeper lines on his brow. He liked to get out a table, and sit over it with a bag of gold.

No banks for him.

He wanted his gold pieces near at hand, so that he could fetch them out at any hour, clink them together and gloat over them.

He was a clinker and a gloater — he cared for nothing else.

We do not have any misers now. Or, if they exist, they go away to a safety deposit vault, get their bonds and gloat over them. Half the fun is gone, you see. You can gloat over bonds as much as you like, but not a clink can you get out of

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them. That probably accounts for the disappearance of misers.

We earnestly request some novelist to bring about a resurrection of these characters. They would be welcome in the short stories, as well. During the past fifteen years American fiction has gone through two epochs — the Gadzooks school and the B'Gosh school.

It is now congealed in what may be called the Ten Below Zero School. Any constant reader of the magazines has to keep on his ulster, ear-tabs, mittens and gum-shoes, from one year's end to another. It never thaws. Loggers, miners, trappers, explorers — any kind of persons so long as they dwell in the frozen north — are what the magazine writer adores.

One of Kipling's characters says that there's never a law of God or man runs north of 53. The magazine editors seem

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to think there's never a thing worth writing of, lives south of 85. Will not some of them dig up one or two of the old characters we have been discussing, and see if they cannot send the thermometer up a few degrees?

We are tired of stamping our feet, blowing on our hands, and rubbing snow on our noses to keep them from falling off.

BY TELEPHONE

BY TELEPHONE

“ON January 14th,” so announced a circular issued last month by the Ezra Beesly Free Public Library of Baxter, “we shall install a telephone service at the library. Telephone your inquiries to the library, and they will be answered over the wire.”

Now, January 14th was last Saturday, and this is undoubtedly the first account of the innovation at Baxter.

Miss Pansy Patterson, assistant reference librarian, took her seat at the telephone promptly at nine o'clock, ready to answer all questions. She had, near her, a small revolving bookcase containing an encyclopædia, a dictionary, the Statesman's Year Book, Who's Who in America, Mulhall's Dictionary of Statistics, The Old Librarian's Almanack, the Cata-

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logue of the Boston Athenæum, Baedeker's guide book to the United States, Cruden's Concordance, and a few others of the most valuable reference books, in daily use among librarians.

Should this stock fail her she could send the stenographer, Miss Parkinson, on a hurry call to the reading-room, where Miss Bixby, the head reference librarian, would be able to draw on a larger collection of books to find the necessary information.

Mr. Amos Vanhoff, the new librarian of Baxter, stood over the telephone, rubbing his hands in pleasant anticipation of the workings of the new system which he had installed.

The bell rang almost immediately, and Miss Patterson took the receiver from its hook.

“Is this the library?”

“Yes.”

BY TELEPHONE

"This is Mrs. Humphrey Mayo. I understand that you answer inquiries by telephone? Yes! Thank you. Have you any books about birds?"

"Oh, yes — a great many. Which —"

"Well; I am so much interested in a large bird that has been perching on a syringa bush on our front lawn for the last half hour. It is a very extraordinary-looking bird — I have never seen one like it. I cannot make it out clearly through the opera glass, and I do not dare to go nearer than the piazza for fear of startling it. I only discovered it as I was eating breakfast, and I do not know how long it has been there. None of the bird books I own seem to tell anything about such a bird. Now, if I should describe it to you do you think you could look it up in some of your books?"

"Why, I think so."

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“Well, it’s a very large bird — like an eagle or a large hawk. And it is nearly all black; but its feathers are very much ruffled up. It has a collar or ruff around its neck, and on its head there is a splash of bright crimson or scarlet. I think it must be some tropical bird that has lost its way. Perhaps it is hurt. Now, what do you suppose it is?”

“You see, I haven’t any bird books right at hand — I’ll send in to the reading-room. Will you hold the line, please?”

Miss Patterson turned to the stenographer and repeated Mrs. Mayo’s description of the strange bird.

“Will you please ask Miss Bixby to look it up, and let me know as soon as possible?”

During the interval that followed, the operator at central asked three times: “Did you get them?” and three times

BY TELEPHONE

Mrs. Mayo and Miss Patterson chanted in unison: "Yes; hold the line, please!"

Finally the messenger returned, remarking timidly: "He says it's a crow."

"A crow!" exclaimed Miss Patterson.

"A crow!" echoed Mrs. Mayo, at the other end of the wire, "oh, that is impossible. I know *crows* when I see them. Why, this has a ruff, and a magnificent red coloring about its head. Oh, it's no crow!"

"Whom did you see in there?" inquired Miss Patterson. "Miss Bixby?"

"No," replied the young and timid stenographer, "it was that young man — I don't know his name."

She had entered the library service only the week before.

"Oh, Edgar! He does n't know anything about anything. Miss Bixby must have left the room for a moment, and I

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suppose he had brought in a book for a reader. He is only a page — you must n't ask him any questions. Do go back and see if Miss Bixby is n't there now, and ask her."

A long wait ensued, and as Mrs. Mayo's next-door neighbor insisted on using the telephone to order her dinner from the marketmen, the line had to be abandoned. In ten or fifteen minutes, however, the assistant reference librarian was once more in communication with Mrs. Mayo.

"We think the bird might possibly be a California grebe — but we cannot say for sure. It is either that or else Hawkins's giant kingfisher — unless it has a tuft back of each ear. If it has the tufts, it may be the white-legged hoopoo. But Mr. Reginald Kookle is in the library, and we have asked him about it. You know of Mr. Kookle, of course?"

BY TELEPHONE

"What, the author of 'Winged Warblers of Waltham' and 'Common or Garden Birds'?"

"Yes; and of 'Birds I Have Seen Between Temple Place and Boylston Street' and 'The Chickadee and His Children.'"

"Yes, indeed — I know his books very well. I own several of them. What does he think?"

"He is not sure. But Miss Bixby described this bird to him, and he is very much interested. He has started for your house already, because he wants to see the bird."

"Oh, that will be perfectly lovely. Thank you so much. It will be fine to have Mr. Kookle's opinion. Good-by."

"Good-by."

And the conference was ended. It may not be out of place to relate that Mr.

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Kookle, the eminent bird author, arrived at Mrs. Mayo's a few minutes later. As he heard that the mysterious stranger was on the front lawn, he approached the house carefully from the rear, and climbed over the back fence. He walked around the piazza to the front door, where Mrs. Mayo awaited him.

Mr. Kookle was dressed in his famous brown suit, worn in order that he might be in perfect harmony with the color of dead grass, and hence, as nearly as possible, unseen on the snowless, winter landscape. He had his field glasses already leveled on the syringa bush when Mrs. Mayo greeted him. She carried an opera glass.

"Right there — do you see, Mr. Kookle?"

"Yes, I see him all right."

They both looked intently at the bird. The weather was a little unfavorable for

BY TELEPHONE

close observation, for, as it may be remembered, Saturday morning was by turns foggy and rainy. A light mist hung over the wet grass now, but the tropical visitor, or whatever he was, could be descried without much difficulty.

He sat, or stood, either on the lower branches of the bush, or amongst them, on the ground. His feathers were decidedly ruffled, and he turned his back toward his observers. His shoulders were a little drawn up, in the attitude usually ascribed by artists to Napoleon, looking out over the ocean from St. Helena's rocky isle. But it was possible, even at that distance, to see his magnificent crimson crest.

Mr. Kookle took a deep breath. "Yes," he said, "I suspected it."

"What?" inquired Mrs. Mayo, eagerly, "What is it?"

"Madam," returned the bird author, im-

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pressively, "you have my sincerest congratulations. I envy you. You have the distinction of having been the first observer, to the best of my knowledge, of the only specimen of the *Bulbus Claristicus Giganticus* ever known to come north of the fourteenth parallel of latitude."

Mrs. Mayo was moved nearly to tears. Never in all her career as a bird enthusiast, not even when she addressed the Twenty Minute Culture Club on "Sparrows I Have Known" — never had she felt the solemn joy that filled her at this minute.

"Are you sure that is what it is?" she asked in hushed tones.

"Absolutely positive," replied the authority, "at least — if I could only get a nearer view of his feet, I could speak with certainty. Now, if we could surround the bush, so to speak, you creeping up from

BY TELEPHONE

one side and I from the other, we might get nearer to him. I will make a *détour* to your driveway, and so get on the other side of him. You approach him from the house."

"Just let me get my rubbers," said Mrs. Mayo.

"Please hurry," the other returned.

When the rubbers were procured they commenced their strategic movement. "If I could only be sure that it is the *Bulbus*!" ejaculated Mr. Kookle.

Mrs. Mayo turned toward him.

"Do you suppose," she whispered, "that it is the great condor of the Andes?"

Mr. Kookle shook his head.

Then they both started again on their stealthy errand. Slowly, quietly, they proceeded until they stood opposite each other, with the syringa and its strange visitant half-way between them. Then Mr. Kookle

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raised his hand as a signal, and they began to approach the bush. The bird seemed to hear them, for he immediately took interest in the proceedings. He raised his head, hopped out from the bush, and uttered a peculiar, hoarse note that sounded like:

“Craw-w-w-w!”

Mr. Kookle and Mrs. Mayo stopped in their tracks, electrified. Then the bird put its other foot on the ground and gave vent to this remarkable song:

“Cut, cut, cut, cut, cut, ker-dar-cut! Ker-dar-cut! Ker-dar-cut!”

Then it gave two or three more raucous squawks, ran toward the fence, flew over it, ran across the street, under Mr. Higgins’s fence, and joined his other Black Minorca fowls that were seeking their breakfast in the side yard.

Then Mrs. Mayo returned to the house,

BY TELEPHONE

and Mr. Reginald Kooke, the author of "Winged Warblers of Waltham" and "The Chickadee and His Children," returned his field glasses to their case, turned up the collar of his famous brown suit, and walked rapidly down the street.

But Miss Patterson had been busy at the library telephone all this time. Scarcely had she ended her conversation with Mrs. Mayo when someone called her to have her repeat "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night" over the telephone. This was only finished when the bell rang again.

"Hello! This the library?"

"Yes."

"Well, I wish you'd tell me the answer to this. There's a prize offered in the 'Morning Howl' for the first correct answer. 'I am only half as old as my uncle,' said a man, 'but if I were twice as old as he

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is I should only be three years older than my grandfather, who was born at the age of sixteen. How old was the man?' Now, would you let x equal the age of the uncle, or the man? "

Miss Patterson could not think of any immediate answer to this, nor of any book of reference that would tell her instantly. So she appealed to Mr. Vanhoff, who had returned to the room.

"What was that?" inquired Mr. Vanhoff; "get him to repeat it."

She did so, and the librarian struggled with it for a moment. "Why, it is all nonsense. Tell him that we cannot solve any newspaper puzzles over the telephone. He will have to come to the library."

Then Mrs. Pomfret Smith announced herself on the telephone.

"That the library? Who is this? Miss Patterson? Oh, how do you do? This

BY TELEPHONE

is so nice of Mr. Vanhoff. I was coming down to the library this morning, but the weather is so horrid that I thought I would telephone instead. Now, my cousin is visiting me, and I have told her about a novel I read last summer, and she is just crazy to read it, too. But I can't for the life of me recall the name of it. Now, do you remember what it was?"

"Why—I'm afraid I don't. Who was the author?"

"That's just the trouble. I can't remember his name to save my life! I'm not even sure that I noticed his name—or her name—whoever it was. I never care much who wrote them—I just look them through, and if they're illustrated by Howard Chandler Christy or anybody like that, I just take them, because I know then they'll be all right. This one had pictures by Christy or Wenzell or one of

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those men. It was a lovely book — oh, I do wish you could tell me what it was! Where is Miss Anderson? She would know. Is n't she there?"

"No — I am sorry, she will not be here till afternoon. If you could tell me something about the novel — the plot, and so forth, I might have read it myself."

"Oh, of course you've read it. Why, you read all the books that come into the library, don't you?"

"Not quite all."

"You don't? How funny! Why, whatever do you find to do with yourselves down there? You're sure you don't remember the one I want?"

"Why, Mrs. Smith, you have n't told me about the plot of it yet."

"Oh, no, so I have n't. Well — let me see — Um! why, it was about — now, what in the world *was* it about? Oh dear,

BY TELEPHONE

I never can think, with this thing up to my ear! What's that, Central? Yes, I got them all right — hold the line, please. Oh dear, I'll have to ring off and think it over, and as soon as I remember, I'll call you up again. Thank you, so much! Good-by."

The next was a man who spoke in a deep voice. "Hello! Is this the library? Have you a history of Peru? You have? Now, that is very fortunate. I do not know how many places I have inquired. I only want a few facts — only a paragraph or two. You can tell them to me over the 'phone, can you not, and I will take them down?"

Miss Patterson had her finger on an article about Peru in the encyclopædia. "'Peru,'" she began to read, "'the ancient kingdom of the Incas —'"

"Of the whichers?" interrupted the man.

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"The Incas," she repeated.

"Spell it," he commanded.

"I n c a s," she spelled.

"Oh, Lord!" said the man, "that's South America. I've been hearing about them all day. The principal of the High School gave me a song and dance about the Incas. I mean Peru, Indiana. Here, I'll come down to the library — this telephone booth is so hot I can't get my breath. Good-by."

Mrs. Pomfret Smith, unlike Jeffries, had come back. She greeted Miss Patterson with enthusiasm.

"Oh, Miss Patterson, I've remembered all about it now. You see, it starts this way. There is a girl, a New York girl, who has married an English lord, or, rather, she is just going to marry him — the brother of the first man she was en-

BY TELEPHONE

gaged to steps in, and tells her that the lord is n't genuine, and he presents her maid with a jeweled pin which his mother, the countess, received from her husband — her first husband, that is — three days after the battle of — oh, I don't know the name of the battle — the 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' it was, and he was in that — no, his uncle was, and he said to his tent-mate, the night before the battle: 'Charley, I'm not coming out of this alive, and my cousin will be the lawful heir, but I want you to take this and dig with it underneath the floor of the old summer house, and the papers that you will find there will make Gerald a rich man.' And so he took it and when he got to Washington he handed it to the old family servant who had n't seen him for sixty years, and then dropped dead, so they never knew whether he was the real

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one or only the impostor, and so just as the wedding was about to take place the uncle — he was a senator — said to the bishop, who was going to marry them: ‘*Please get off this line, I am using it!*’ And so it never took place, after all. Now, can you tell me what the name of the book is, Miss Patterson?”

“Why, I am afraid I do not recognize it. It sounds a little like Mrs. Humphry Ward and Ouida and Frances Hodgson Burnett, and someone else, all at once. Was it by any of them, Mrs. Smith?”

“Oh, no, I am sure it was not. Why, I am surprised — I thought you would know it now, without any hesitation!”

“I am sorry.”

“Oh, very well, then. Good-by.”

The last in a tone as acid and cold as lemon ice. It seemed to express Mrs.

BY TELEPHONE

Smith's opinion of all librarians. Miss Patterson was much grieved, but the telephone bell rang again before she had time to reflect.

"Is this the library? Oh, yes. I wonder if you have a life of Mrs. Browning?"

"Yes — I think so. What would you like to know about her?"

"Well, there — I am certainly glad. This is Miss Crumpet, you know! Miss Hortense Crumpet. I have had such a time. Have you the book right there? I do wish you would —"

"If you will wait just a minute, I will send for the book — I have n't it here."

"Oh, thank you so much."

The book was fetched, and Miss Patterson informed Miss Crumpet that she now held the volume ready.

"Have you it right there?"

"Yes."

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“Well, I want to see a picture of Mrs. Browning. We have a portrait here, and my aunt says it is George Eliot, and I know it is Mrs. Browning. Now, if you could just hold up the book — why, how perfectly ridiculous of me! I can’t see it over the telephone, can I? Why, how absolutely absurd! I never thought at all! I was going to come to the library for it, only it is so horrid and rainy, and then I remembered that I saw in the paper about your answering questions by telephone, and I thought, why, how nice, I ’ll just call them up on the ’phone — and now it won’t do me any good at all, will it?”

“I ’m afraid not.”

“And I ’ll have to come to the library after all. Oh, dear! Good-by.”

“Good-by.”

The bell rang again as soon as the receiver had been replaced.

BY TELEPHONE

"Hello! How are you for pigs' feet to-day?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Pigs' feet! How many yer got?"

"This is the public library. Did you call for us?"

"Who? The what? No; I'm trying to get Packer and Pickleums. I don't want no public library. What's the matter with that girl at central? This is the third time —"

His conversation ended abruptly as the receiver was hung up. Miss Patterson was soon called again. Mrs. Pomfret Smith was once more unto the breach.

"Miss Patterson? I've remembered some more about that book, now. It had a bright red cover and the name of it was printed in gilt letters. It was about so high — oh, I forgot, you can't see over the telephone, can you? Well, it was

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about as big as books usually are, you know, and it was quite thick — oh, it must have had a hundred or two hundred pages — perhaps more than that, I am not sure. And the front picture was of a girl — the heroine, I guess, and a man, and he had his arms around her and she was looking up into his face. *Now*, you can remember what book it was, can't you, Miss Patterson? ”

A LITERARY MEET

A LITERARY MEET

DR. GOTTHOLD, formerly librarian to H. H. Prince Otto of Grunewald, has very kindly forwarded a copy of the "Olympian Times" containing an account of the recent field day, gymkhana, and general meet of the Fictitious and Historical Characters' Amateur Athletic Association. It is reproduced here verbatim:

On the morning of the meet everyone was delighted to see that fair weather prevailed. As it was well known that the pious Æneas was going to act as one of the field judges, a good many persons had expected that his old enemy Æolus would contrive some kind of a kibosh in the shape of high winds. But nothing of the sort happened, and thousands streamed out to the grounds in the best of spirits.

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The assemblage was a brilliant one. The "Times's" representative noticed a number of automobile parties. A magnificent new car belonging to Helen of Troy carried its fair owner, and a select party consisting of Iseult of Ireland, Mme. Anna Karenina, Paris, Tristram and Don Juan. Another car, belonging to Baron Chevrial, contained that nobleman, as well as Mr. Dorian Gray, Iago, and James Steerforth, Esq. A special railway car belonging to Croesus, King of Lydia, brought a large party, including Omar Khayyam, Comus, Shylock and the Marquis of Carabas.

The football game was scheduled as the first event. The two teams came on the field at a dog-trot led by their respective captains. This was the line-up:

Achilles (Captain), l.e.....r.e., Umslopogaas
Mercutio, l.t.....r.t., Raffles
John Ridd, l.g.....r.g., Learoyd

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Ursus, c.....c., Falstaff (Hercules)
Robinson Crusoe, r.g.....l.g., Roderick Dhu
Sir Launcelot, r.t.....l.t., Capt. Brassbound
Robin Hood, r.e.....l.e., Hamlet (Captain)
Ulysses, q.b.....q.b., S. Ortheris
Othello, r.h.b.....l.h.b., Lars Porsena
Rawdon Crawley, l.h.b.....r.h.b., Sydney Carton
T. Mulvaney, f.b.....f.b., Hector

Officials: Referee, Sherlock Holmes; umpire, King Arthur; field judge, Henry Esmond; linesmen, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

We do not know who was responsible for the make-up of the teams, and we cannot enter into a detailed description of the game, but we must say that a more hopelessly one-sided affair we have never witnessed. The team captained by the Prince of Denmark had about as much chance against that led by the swift-footed son of Peleus as Miss Lindsay's Select School for Girls would against the Yale 'varsity.

Both teams were badly off for tackles, and while we do not wish to criticise the

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fairly good game played by Sir Launcelot and Captain Brassbound, we cannot help remarking that neither Mercutio nor Raffles had any business in that position.

We understand that Mr. Raffles formerly had some reputation as a cricketer, and we advise him to stick to that game. As for Mercutio (whose reputation, we believe, rests chiefly on a rather unsuccessful duel in Verona a number of years ago) it was plain that his was the weakest part of the line. Time and again Hector tore through Mercutio for big gains.

Indeed, if Hamlet had had the sense to keep pounding at left tackle his team might at least have scored one touchdown. But instead, Captain Hamlet would wander off between the plays, muttering to himself something about to punt or not to punt, and the quarter, Ortheris, was left to run the team alone.

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This was unfortunate, for although Mr. Ortheris played a quick and snappy game himself, his signals were badly chosen. We believe that the climate of India, where he used to reside, affected him in some unfavorable manner, so that he is subject to occasional fits of madness. What with the peculiarity of the captain of his team in this respect, it seemed as if their side were badly handicapped. Umslopogaas played brilliantly at right end, but it was no use.

What in the name of common sense impelled their coach to put Sir John Falstaff at center? The day has gone by when weight is the only consideration in that position. Moreover, you cannot train for football on sack and capons. Ursus made the old knight look like thirty cents in counterfeit money. Luckily he was taken out at the end of the first period — wheezing badly — and Hercules took his place.

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The game ended as might have been expected — 34 to 0, in favor of Achilles's team.

The football game had occupied most of the morning, but after it was over there was still time for the spectators to witness some minor contests before luncheon.

Many wandered over to the tennis courts. A set of mixed doubles was in progress, with Lady Macbeth and Pudd'n-head Wilson opposed by Morgan le Fay and Mr. Isaacs. The Queen of Scotland and her partner from Missouri took a love set at the beginning of the match, but the second set was hotly contested, and finally went to Morgan le Fay and Mr. Isaacs, 7-5.

Morgan le Fay won ace after ace, proving herself the mistress of a very powerful and puzzling service, while Mr. Isaacs covered the court with the agility of a cat.

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They took the final set, and the match, winning easily with a score of 6-1.

Gentlemen's singles were also being played, and at the time when our representative had to leave the courts the tournament was practically won by Nathan Burke, as the only undefeated players remaining were Hugh Wynne and Alfred Jingle.

Under the trees near by, some games of cards were in progress. Miss Lily Bart was instructing Diana of the Crossways, Major Pendennis, and Mr. Pickwick in auction bridge.

Horatius, hearing the word "bridge" mentioned, hurried over to the table, but when he saw what was going on, lost his interest and walked away toward the golf links with Sir Patrick Spens.

At another table Mr. John Oakhurst seemed to have obliterated the color-line,

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for he was deeply engaged in a three-handed game of poker with Rev. Mr. Johnsing and Brother Cyanide Whiffles of the Thompson Street Poker Club.

Everybody was interested in aviation, and when the rumor got about that the aviators were going to make some flights there was a general rush toward the hangars. Only three made ascents, however — Darius Green, Icarus, and Peter Pan. The first tried one of his celebrated spiral descents, and of course came to the ground with a crash. His machine was a total wreck.

Icarus did not have much better luck — he was carried off to the hospital. He rose to an enormous height, and is said to have beaten all previous records for altitude, but something went wrong with his biplane, and he fell with terrible force.

King Arthur, his duties as umpire of the

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football game finished, challenged Macbeth to nine holes of golf, and beat the Scottish king, on his own heath, so to speak. King Arthur's drives were magnificent, showing that the arm that once wielded Excalibur had not weakened since its owner's retirement to the island valley of Avilion. They play very classy golf in Avilion.

Macbeth's putts were beautiful to watch, but as he usually arrived on the green in at least two strokes more than the monarch of the Round Table, they did him very little good. Twice on the drive he sliced, and the ball went wide into a grove of trees. When he asked his caddie the name of the grove, and the youth replied, "Birnam Wood, your Majesty," the former Thane of Cawdor turned pale and hammered the ground with his brassie.

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When the two royal players came to the ninth tee, Macbeth was heard to mutter, "What though I foozle, top, and slice, and thou opposed be now three up — yet will I try the last — lay on, Mac — I mean, it 's your honor, Arthur!"

King Arthur did the difficult ninth hole in bogey, but poor old Macbeth plowed up the turf all along the fair green, and finally holed out amid a burst of Scotch profanity sad to hear.

Neither of their queens was present — her Majesty of Scotland being engaged, as we have said, on the tennis courts, while Queen Guinevere — well, it is enough for anyone to read the line-up of one of the football teams to know that Queen Guinevere was still lingering around the clubhouse, waiting for the players to come out. We have no wish to mention unpleasant things, and we abhor scandals — still facts

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are facts, and it is the duty of a conscientious newspaper to record them.

Down on the lake that expert submarine navigator, Captain Nemo, was entertaining a large crowd by the maneuvers of his celebrated boat, the Nautilus, and an exhibition of skillful paddling was offered by Hiawatha in his canoe.

The sound of revolver shots drew a number of spectators to see a match between Sherlock Holmes and The Virginian.

The greatest throng, however, surrounded a fencing bout between Cyrano de Bergerac and D'Artagnan. Cyrano had some dispute with the referee, before beginning, on the question of whether he should be allowed to compose a poem while he was fencing. He alleged that it was his custom to do so, and that he could not possibly appear at his best if the privilege

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were denied. His opponent objected, however.

“Just a ballade, monsieur,” pleaded Cyrano, “or at least, a vilanelle.”

“Cut out the poet business, Cy!” shouted someone — it is suspected that Chimmie Fadden was the man, and the referee so ruled. D’Artagnan was declared the winner of the match that followed.

After luncheon the whole assemblage were gathered about the diamond for the long expected game of baseball. This was to be played between two scrub teams known as “The Boys” and “The Old Men” — though some of the latter (notably Romeo and Richard Feverel) objected to the classification. These were the nines:

THE BOYS

Tom Sawyer, 2b.....Allan Quartermain, 2b.
Joe Harper, 3b.....Natty Bumppo, r.f.

THE OLD MEN

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Tom Bailey, l.f.....	Friar Tuck, c.f.
Kim, c.f.....	Romeo, 1b.
Tom Brown, r.f.....	Sam Weller, s.s.
Jack Hall, s.s.....	Richard Feverel, l.f.
Frank Nelson, 1b.....	Tom Jones, 3b.
Mark the Match Boy, c.....	Don Quixote, c.
Huck Finn, p.....	Hotspur, p.

The Old Men banged into Huck Finn's delivery for three hits right at the start and came back for a couple more in the second inning. Huck, however, began to look better, and after the fourth he was swinging the ball over in great shape. The Old Men made but two hits in the last seven innings and none in the last five. Kim was the star on the attack. Up four times he made just that many hits, one going for a double.

One of Kim's drives came fast on a long bound and hit Romeo in the face. Kim drove in a pair of runs with his double and started the scoring for The

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Boys in the first inning, while in the sixth he himself came across with the tally which eventually proved the winning one.

Hotspur pitched a fair game. The greatest difference came in the defensive work of the teams. The Boys went through without a break.

Tom Jones had a case of the wabbles for The Old Men, and there was a lot of uncertainty about the work of the infield because of the breaks he made. The outfielders for The Old Men were also having trouble fielding the ball clean and throwing to the plate.

Sam Weller was the one chap on his team who was going at speed. He pulled off one play which belongs in the Hall of Fame, Joe Harper losing a hit and The Boys two runs as a result.

With Allan Quartermain and Leatherstocking down in the first inning, Friar

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Tuck fattened his batting average a bit by bunting and beating the throw to first. Romeo put the ball over Tom Brown's head up against the bleacher front and legged it around to third, while Friar Tuck scored, a fumble by Frank Nelson on Tom Brown's return cinching things. Sam Weller lambled a single to center and Romeo scored. Sam was out stealing a moment later.

Tom Sawyer got The Boys away in fine style with a smash to left for a single. Joe Harper drew a walk. Tom Bailey sacrificed, and Kim drove a hot grounder right through Allan Quartermain and wound up on second before the outfielders could get the leather back to the infield. Tom Sawyer and Joe Harper came home. Tom Brown popped up a foul to Romeo, and Kim was doubled off second after the catch.

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Both teams kept right on scoring in the second. Dicky Feverel got The Old Men away well with a single and then stole second. Tom Jones put him on third with a sacrifice, and Don Quixote gave him the opportunity to score on a long fly to The Bad Boy. Hotspur whaled a fly over Kim's head. The famous scrapper tried to make it a home run, but was caught at the plate on Jack Hall's return.

In The Boys' half, after two had gone, Mark the Match Boy reached first on a fumble by Tom Jones. Huck Finn drove a single to right. Tom Sawyer put up a hot fly which Allan Quartermain failed to get, and Mark the Match Boy came home, Huck Finn going to third. Tom Sawyer stole second. Joe Harper drove a red-hot one over the bag at second, and it looked like a sure single and two more runs for the kids. Sam Weller went

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over for a sensational one-hand stop and threw Joe out at first. It was a phenomenal play. That settled the scoring until the sixth inning. Kim got a single, Tom Brown bunted and was safe when Tom Jones fumbled. Jack Hall sacrificed the pair along, and when Hotspur passed Frank Nelson the sacks were full. Mark the Match Boy raised a fly to Friar Tuck and Kim scored on the catch. Huck Finn fanned.

The Boys' final run came in the eighth on Jack Hall's single, Mark the Match Boy's grounder through the lion hunter, and a single by Tom Sawyer. The score:

Innings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The Boys	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	..—6
The Old Men	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0—3

“THE DESERT ISLAND TEST”

“THE DESERT ISLAND TEST”

A ROLL of papers containing the following narrative has been forwarded to the “ Transcript ” by Captain “ Sol ” Farr of the Gloucester fishing schooner “ Salt Mackerel.”

Captain Farr discovered them, floating about in an olive bottle, a few miles off Boston Light. As soon as he had examined the papers (which are slightly damaged by salt water and olive vinegar) he perceived their bearing upon an important literary question of the day, and very properly sent them to “ The Librarian.”

The original papers are to be deposited in the Ezra Beesly Free Public Library of Baxter (Captain Farr’s native town), where in a week or two they may be seen

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by anyone applying to the librarian, or one of his assistants, between 9 A. M. and 8 P. M.

The narrative, written in a shaky hand, on twelve sheets of note paper, contains the following remarkable statement:

I, Professor Horatio B. Fassett, M.A., Ph.D., write this appeal (with a perfectly detestable fountain-pen) on an uninhabited and (so far as I am aware) unknown island, somewhere off the eastern coast of South America, on (as near as I can guess) the twelfth of December, 1908. For two years have I dwelt in wretchedness in this place, a most unwilling (and unsuccessful) follower of Robinson Crusoe. I know that it is customary in such appeals as this, which I am about (in the words of the burial service) to commit to the deep, to give, approximately

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at least, the latitude and longitude of my desert isle, in order that searching parties (which I earnestly pray may be sent for me) shall know where to look.

Alas! all my studies have been devoted to literature and the fine arts, and although I have certain instruments which poor Captain Bucko used to ascertain the ship's position, I am as helpless with them as an infant. True, I have endeavored to look at the sun with them — and the moon, too, but I could not observe that those bodies had any than their usual aspect when thus viewed. As for the signs which are engraved on the surface of these instruments, I could copy them down here in hope that they might give a clue to those expert in navigation; but as they are, so far as I can see, exactly the same as those which were on the instruments when we left New York, I fear it would be of no avail.

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The only hint, then, of the geographical position of this island must come from my narrative. I beseech whatever person finds it to send news of me without delay to the president and faculty of Upidee University, where, alas, I suppose my chair (the James A. Rewbarb professorship of German Literature) is already filled.

It is unnecessary for me to speak much of my career. In the obituary notices that doubtless appeared when the ship "Hardtack" failed to arrive at Valparaiso, I suppose it was stated that I was the only passenger on that unfortunate vessel. I am, I believe, the only survivor of her wreck. Worn out with revising proof of the second edition of my doctor's thesis ("That the umlaut should be placed one-fourth of a millimetre higher than is now the custom") I had, at the advice of my physician, embarked on the "Hardtack,"

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sailing from New York for Valparaiso, Sept. 9, 1906.

The voyage was uneventful for about four weeks, and life on the ship (which I think, by the way, was called by the captain a “brig”) was not distasteful to me. One morning, however, I heard a commotion overhead, and going upstairs found Captain Bucko in a state of great excitement. I asked him the cause, and he replied that the mate had put the brig in irons.

I had often read of this custom in times of mutiny, so I remarked: “I suppose it was by your orders, Captain?”

He did not reply, and I presently learned the cause of his anxiety. They did not seem to be able to make the ship go ahead in a straight line, and, to make matters worse, a rocky island on which the waves were breaking violently, had been discovered on the right hand side of the vessel.

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I ought to explain that I am not perfectly familiar with all the technicalities of ship-navigation, and I retain only a confused idea of what followed.

I know that I was ordered to get into a small rowboat which was jumping about in a most alarming fashion at one side of the ship, and that when I refused to take such a ridiculous step, I was seized by two sailors and thrown into the boat. I must have struck my head on something, for I knew nothing else until I found myself lying on a beach, pounded and bruised by the waves. I got up, and staggered to a place where the sand was dry, and there I fell again exhausted.

Of the captain and the crew of the "Hardtack" I have never seen a trace, except a coat belonging to the mate, which was washed on shore a few days later. Their small boat was probably tipped over

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by the waves, and they were all drowned. It is strange that I, the only one of them unfamiliar with the ocean, should have been spared. The “Hardtack” itself evidently became hitched on a rock some little distance from the shore, for there it stayed for part of that day, with great waves beating upon it. At last the masts fell down, and in a few days the ship was broken in pieces, till nothing remained. Many of these fragments floated to the shore, with various articles from the cargo.

For the first three days I was excessively miserable. I was forced to sleep out of doors on the first night, and when I felt hungry the next morning, there was nothing to eat. My tastes are simple, but my habits are regular, and in my rooms at Upidee, as well as in the “Hardtack,” I was accustomed to have a cup of coffee at half-past seven each morning. Now I

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searched the shore for some hours, but could find nothing except some mussels or clams and a few starfish. The starfish were very tough, and not at all agreeable in taste, and though a Little Neck clam, properly iced and served with lemon and other condiments, is not an ill beginning to a dinner, I cannot pretend that I found these shellfish, eaten raw on a windy beach, other than nauseous.

But I hasten over these troubles and also over my discovery of a large number of boxes of food which floated ashore, three days later, from the wreck. Some of it was edible and it sufficed until I found other means of sustenance on the island. Of my discovery of two deserted huts (relics of former castaways, perhaps), of my domestication of several wild goats, whom I learned (not without difficulty) to milk, and of my capture of fish in the inlet — of

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all these things I need not write. My troubles are not material, but intellectual. And they are so great that I earnestly implore some one to come to my rescue.

To make my sufferings clear I must remind the reader that I am that Horatio Fassett who won the \$500 prize from “Somebody’s Magazine” four years ago for the best answer to the question: “If you were cast away on a desert island what one hundred books would you prefer to have with you?”

I worked hard to compile my list, and it was generally agreed to be the most scholarly selection of one hundred titles ever made. The publishers of “Somebody’s Magazine” not only paid me the \$500, but presented me with a copy, well bound, of each of the books. These (packed securely in a water-tight box, so constructed as to float) accompanied

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me in the "Hardtack," and I need tell no scholar that during my first days on this island, as I walked the beach and watched the remnants of the vessel float ashore, it was not so much for cases of concentrated soup nor tins of baked-beans that I yearned, as for my box of the "One Hundred Best Books."

At last it came! That was a happy day — about a week after my arrival on the island. I saw the box, tossed about in the surf, and I dashed in and secured it. I was now living, with comparative comfort, in one of the huts; and thither I carried the books. I was overjoyed. It was my privilege to put my books to the test — something that had never been accorded to the compilers of any of the similar lists which have been made in such profusion. With trembling hands (and a screwdriver) I opened the box and took out the books.

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They were in perfect order — the waterproof box had been well made.

From this point, I copy the entries in my diary, and let them tell the rest of my dismal story.

“Oct. 16. I arranged the books neatly, this afternoon, on top of some empty biscuit boxes. They were all there: Tasso, Homer, Don Quixote, The Divine Comedy, Browning, and the rest. They looked delightful, and reminded me of my study at Upidee. I wonder if I shall ever see that study again, and I wonder what will become of the second edition of my thesis on the umlaut. It was to appear next April, and now who knows whether I shall be there ready to reply to the attacks which I know it will provoke?

“From this gloomy line of thought, I turned again to the Hundred Best Books. Which should I begin to read? There

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were my beloved Goethe and Schiller — should I start with them? I took a volume, and had opened it, when it occurred to me that I had not yet gone that day to the high rock where I looked for passing ships. I put Goethe back on the biscuit box, and spent an anxious afternoon staring at the ocean. But I saw nothing.

“The evening I spent in trying to arrange some fishing lines, as the firelight — my only illumination — is not favorable for reading to one afflicted with astigmatism. I miss the electric droplight that I used at Upidee, or even the kerosene lamp in the cabin of the ‘Hardtack.’ I must try to make some candles.

“Oct. 17. I passed the morning in trying to tame a wild goat — or perhaps I had better say in trying to induce one to graze outside my cabin, instead of investigating the interior. They are not at all

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shy, but are inclined to be rather sociable. In the afternoon I took Goethe with me to the high rock, where I sat with the volume on my knee keeping a watch for vessels. I cannot say that I read much. German literature makes me feel rather homesick, and I find brings me recollections of the distressing recitations of last year's freshman class.

“Oct. 18. When I went to the lookout to-day I took Browning with me. Good heavens, I found I can no longer read Browning! This was an astounding state of things, and I had to examine myself rather sharply. I remembered that I had never for a moment been in doubt, when I made up my list, of including Browning. I had read, twenty years ago, the ‘Dramatic Lyrics,’ with the greatest of pleasure, but the longer poems had seemed to me rather dull, and indeed a large pro-

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portion of the poet's work was intensely irritating to me on account of its needless and exasperating obscurity. At the time I did not consider this a cause for worry. Browning was a great poet — everyone said so; his treasures did not lie on the surface — one must dive below in order to find the rich pearls which lay concealed there. I remember using this metaphor in a lecture that I delivered before the Woman's Club of Buffalo. I had always intended to study the longer poems; but I had never done it. Now they were unreadable to me. As for the 'Dramatic Lyrics,' they did not charm me as formerly. I found myself longing for a volume of Wordsworth or Tennyson. Neither was included in my Best Books, though I cannot see now, for the life of me, why I did n't include Tennyson. Could it have been because his poems are easy to under-

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stand and that I thought it would seem more ‘scholarly’ to put in Browning?

“Oct. 20. I have not been to the high rock lately except for a brief visit after breakfast. I have had a little rheumatism — not being used to sleeping in draughty cabins. The goats have been a source of entertainment to me, and I have caught some crabs, which I keep in a little pool of salt water near the cabin. They are amusing to watch, and toasted crab-meat is far from bad at supper time. I kill one with a stick and then broil him on a hot stone.

“Yesterday I tried reading again, but I am bound to confess that there was not much solace in it. The *Odyssey* I soon put down — too much shipwreck and wandering in strange lands. There is no Penelope waiting for me, even if I ever get home alive. And the thought of Ithaca reminded me of Cornell and Professor

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von Füglemann, who is all ready to tear my thesis on the umlaut to pieces. Shakspeare I picked up, but the first play I opened to was 'The Tempest.' I closed Shakspeare and put him back.

"Nov. 25. Nothing has happened worth recording for weeks. Once I saw smoke, from a steamboat, I suppose, but smoke did not do me any good.

"There is something the matter with this list of Best Books. For one thing, they are most of them so tragic. I would give anything for a volume of Mr. Dooley. But that is not all. I have always realized that the great literature of the world is very largely sombre, and I have no more sympathy now than I ever had with the people who want to read nothing but that which keeps them on a broad grin. Even in my dreary situation I could read tragedy, but I have brought precious little

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tragedy that I care for. No doubt most of my books are great monuments of literature, but I am afraid I must have forgotten, when I wrote my list, how few of these books I read now. I must have put them in because they are praised by writers of text-books, and because it seemed the proper thing to do.

“As I go over my reading for the past five years at Upidee, in what do I find it to consist? First, the literature and text-books of my profession. Second, current books — history, biography, art criticism, and an infrequent novel or book of verse. There are not many living novelists or poets that I care about. It makes me fairly rage when I think that I hesitated between ‘Pickwick’ and ‘Jerusalem Delivered’ when I made up my list, and finally decided in favor of the latter as more weighty — which it certainly is.

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“ I used my copy to help sink a lobster trap the other day.

“ Almost the only novel which I condescended to include in my list is ‘ Don Quixote,’ and why did I do that? Because it has been praised for three hundred years, I suppose, instead of for only forty or fifty. It is about the only humorous work which I did include — and except for places here and there it is a dreary waste.

“ Aug. 10, 1907. It is now months since I have had the courage to face this diary. I dreamed last night that I had wandered into a book shop. There were rows of books, for any one of which I would have gladly given my whole celebrated One Hundred. (At least, I would give what is left of them. ‘ Don Quixote ’ has been used to paste over cracks in the walls of my cabin. ‘ Orlando Furioso ’ served to boil some sea-gulls’ eggs one morning for

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breakfast, when I was short of firewood, and the ‘Koran’ fell into the fire one night when I hurled it at some animal — a fox, I think, that came into the hut.) The sight of that bookshop made me weep. I had seized a volume of Tennyson, Stevenson’s Letters, and ‘Sherlock Holmes,’ when the shopkeeper jumped over his counter at me — and I woke, sobbing.

“Sept. 1, 1907. One of the goats ate the *Æneid* to-day.

“Sept. 2. The goat is ill, and I have had to give it one of my few pepsin tablets.”

This is the last entry from the diary that I need transcribe. Over a year has elapsed since I wrote it; and my case is desperate. I will now seal up this narrative in a bottle, and throw it into the sea. Come to my rescue, or I fear I shall go mad!

THE CONVERSATION ROOM

THE CONVERSATION ROOM

TO the Honorable, the Board of Directors of the Blankville Public Library. Gentlemen: I am forced to lay my complaint before you, because your librarian, Dr. W. M. Pierce, so I am told, has sailed for Europe to attend a meeting of librarians in Brussels, whence he will not return for six or seven weeks.

My name is doubtless familiar to you, but perhaps you are not aware that I am engaged in an important piece of research in your library. When I state that my work is an inquiry into the Indo-Iranian origins of the noun 'Fuddy-dud' and its possible derivation from the Semitic, you will understand that it requires the closest possible application and an

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entire freedom from interruptions and distractions.

When I began my researches in your library, six days ago, I presented letters to Dr. Pierce. He very kindly installed me in an alcove, where he had placed a table and chairs, and where he allowed me to assemble the books needed in my studies — some one hundred and thirty or forty volumes. These, together with my papers and writing materials, are permitted to remain on the table from one day to another, as obviously it would be inconvenient for me to have to call for them each morning.

It is my custom to begin work at nine o'clock every day, and to continue (save for an hour at noon) until 6 P. M. For a few days all went very well, and I was making fair progress in my work. But during the last two days, and particularly

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yesterday, I have been subjected to such annoyances that all of my studies have been held at a standstill.

The library, and particularly the remote part of it in which my alcove is situated, has been little frequented during this hot weather. Yesterday, however, an invasion began. The alcove next to mine was visited by a succession of incongruous, inconsequent persons whose conversation made it utterly impossible for me to work. A complaint to Miss Mayhew, the assistant in charge of the library, elicited the fact that conversation is allowed in this alcove.

It is out of the question for me to move my work, as an inspection of the building has shown that there is no other spot where the light suits my eyes.

Yesterday afternoon, totally unable to do any serious work, I took down, in short-

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hand, the stream of driveling talk that occurred in that alcove. I now transcribe it here, in order that your honorable board may have an opportunity of judging the nature of the interruptions to which I am subjected. After giving them due consideration I trust that you will be able to take action in the matter. In the meanwhile my philological researches are of necessity suspended.

I returned to my work, after luncheon, at two o'clock. The alcove next mine was occupied by two persons — a young man and woman, both about twenty years of age. Their talk reached me, and made it impossible for me to follow any consecutive line of thought. At the time when I began to take down their conversation, the young woman was saying:

“What's ‘Gibbon’? People are always talking about reading Gibbon — and

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then they look awfully wise. I've never dared to ask what they mean."

"Oh, it's Gibbon's history of Rome — the 'Fall of the Roman Empire,' or something like that."

"Have you ever read it?"

"Great Scott, no! It's in about a dozen volumes — I don't know how many. I've read some of it — they made us do it, freshman year."

"Is it awfully dry? Would I like it?"

"It's pretty fierce. Nothing to Grote, though — Grote's 'History of Greece' — that's the limit!"

"Gibbon is a man then? I was n't sure what he was."

"Yes; he's the author."

"Oh, why, I've seen him! How stupid of me! I saw him when I was in Baltimore visiting the Ashfords. Why, he's just the *grandest* thing you ever saw in

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your life. He came at the end of a great long procession, with the dearest little choir-boys at the head, and he was all in scarlet robes, and a great long train, with two more little boys holding up his train, and he had the loveliest lace collar — I just went crazy over him! And I saw him on the street afterwards, too, only he did n't have on his scarlet robes then. He had on black clothes, and a tall hat, and when he lifted his hat to someone he had on a little red skull-cap underneath it. Oh, he's a perfect dear. I'd like to read his book — I wonder if they've got it here?"

"No, no — that's not the man. This was an Englishman — his first name was — I forget what it was. Anyhow he's been dead a long time. He was a very fat man, and he proposed to Mme. de Staël, or George Sand, or one of those women, and when he got down on his knees he was

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so fat that he could n't get up again, and had to ask her to help him up."

"How perfectly ridiculous! I hate fat men. I hope she did n't accept him! Did she?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I don't want to read his book, anyhow. But I've simply got to read something that sounds cultured and learned. Aunt Ella has been at me again; she says this is a good time, during vacation. Fanny Brooks has a great long list of the books she has read — I am so tired of having Fanny Brooks thrown at me! She never reads anything interesting, or does anything at all for pleasure. She ought to be a nun. Can't you think of something that will impress Aunt Ella — something that sounds awfully impressive and dry and cultured, but really is easy to read?"

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“ Well, let me see, how about Browning? ”

“ I ’ve read him.”

“ Like him? ”

“ No.”

“ It seems to be a tough proposition. What does your Aunt Ella read? Why don’t you take some of her books? ”

“ Oh, I don’t know. She reads ‘ Women of the Renaissance ’ and things like that. I tried to read some of hers, and I told her I did n’t like them. She said I could n’t expect to, because I have n’t any foundation. How do you get a foundation — that ’s what I ’d like to know! Aunt Ella is perfectly dippy on Italian art. Gracious, is that clock right? It’s nearly three, and I have n’t done any improving reading.”

“ Look here, it ’s a corking afternoon — you don’t want to waste it in this joint.

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Let's go down to the boathouse and get my canoe."

"I'd like to. But what will I say to Aunt Ella?"

"Oh, we'll take some book with us, and you can read while I paddle. What's that one on that shelf? — it looks dry as the deuce. Here you are, just the thing: — 'Notes on the Architectural Antiquities of the District of Gower in Glamorganshire' — that would make a hit with Aunt Ella, all right!"

"It does n't sound very interesting."

"You're right, there. Well, how will this one do? 'The Recently Discovered Cromlech near Is-sur-Tille.'"

"What on earth is a cromlech?"

"You can search me."

"Let's take them both. I'll get them charged at the desk, and meet you outside. I'll read you all about the crom-

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lech — if there are any words in the book I can pronounce.”

With this they went out, and I endeavored to take up my work. Before I could make the slightest progress, however, two more persons entered the alcove. These, to judge from the conversation, were small boys. I had to sit and listen to this chatter:

“What yer got?”

“‘Tinkham Brothers’ Tide-mill.’ What you got?”

“One of Henty’s.”

“What one?”

“‘The Cat of Boobasts.’”

“Aw, that ain’t any good. Why did n’t yer get ‘By England’s Aid’?”

“’T warn’t in.”

“Yes, ’t is, too. Jimmy Goodrich just brought it back.”

“Well, the teacher won’t let yer have it

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the same day it come in. An' she won't let me give back this one now."

"Aw, you're dead easy! Don't yer know how to work that?"

"No."

"Why, just go down there, an' when she ain't lookin' stick that one you got behind some other books on the shelf. Then go round to that wheel thing near her desk, 'By England's Aid' is on that, an' put it under your arm when she ain't lookin' an' go out quick with it. Then you can come round tomorrer, an' get the other one, an' give it back, an' get your card, an' you can stick back 'By England's Aid' any time. Bring it in under your coat, when you come with it."

"Gee, that's great! Have you ever tried it?"

"Have I? I've had six books at home to once, an' two more on my cards."

"How many cards you got?"

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"Two. Ain't you?"

"No, I ain't got but one."

"Did n't they make you take a green card?"

"No; what good are they?"

"They ain't no good, but the teacher makes yer take one. You can get story books on the white card, but the other is for non-fiction."

"What's that?"

"Oh, school books, an' a lot of rotten things like that."

"What do yer want them for?"

"You don't want 'em — excep' a few of 'em. 'The American Boy's Handy Book' is one of 'em. That's all right. Most of 'em are bum. But if you take 'em, it makes a hit with the teacher. They want yer to read 'em. I got a prize last winter for readin' more'n any other feller that comes to the liberry."

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“Gee, you must have hated to read all them school books.”

“Aw, I did n’t read ’em, you mutt. I jus’ took ’em home, an’ brought ’em back in a day or two. Say, have you ever read any of Alger’s?”

“Yup — two of ’em. Eddie Meaghan let me take two of his. You can’t get ’em here. I wish you could, though. They ’re great.”

“I know. I tried to get ’em of the teacher down stairs. She said they warn’t nice. I says yes they are too, for my brother who ’s studyin’ to be a lawyer read ’em. She said she ’d give me some book that was better, an’ she give me one called ‘Brothers of the Air.’”

“Was it any good?”

“Rotten. But Danny Corrigan, the bootblack, told me about a place, a liberry in back of Schmidt’s cigar store where you

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can get Alger's an' Old Sleuth, and Di'mond Dick, an' Bowery Billy. Gee, the teacher 'd have a fit if she sees them — she took one of Old Sleuth's away from Jimmy Goodrich, an' burned it up, an' wrote to his mother about it."

"I 'm goin' down to the children's room, now. Do you s'pose I can work that gag now, an' get 'By England's Aid'?"

"Sure. I 'll go down, too, an' show yer how."

Whereupon these two nuisances departed. Really it seems amazing that children and frivolous persons should be allowed in libraries. As it was four o'clock now, I did hope to be allowed to study in peace for what remained of the afternoon. But the hope was vain, for inside of five minutes two women came into that alcove, that Cave of the Winds, as I may call it.

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They apparently brought some books with them, and they instantly began to discuss them in a manner that drove every idea from my head. There was nothing left for me to do but to record their talk in order to make my complaint perfectly clear to your honorable board. This was the conversation:

“ Well, now, this says that Daniel Pingree died at Marblehead in 1703. If that’s so, how under the sun, I’d like to know, was he married to Pamela Perkins in 1706? ”

“ Why, it does n’t say that, does it? ”

“ Look for yourself. There it is. And who was Pamela Pingree who died in 1689? ”

“ Oh, she was his great-aunt. I’ve got her traced all clear enough. Her mother was a Jimson. They lived in the old Jimson homestead in Worcester. Her father

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was Zachariah Jimson, and he was my ancestor; he was the third cousin of the Earl of Dingleberry. I got into the 'Grand Dames of the Pequot War,' and the 'United Order of American Descendants of Third Cousins of Earls' — both of them, through Zachariah. But that does n't explain how Molly Bixby, whose mother came over in the Sarah Jane from Bristol, and who settled at Cohasset in 1690, turned up in Philadelphia in 1775 married to an officer in the English army. Then I am nearly distracted about Jabez Whicher. He was an intimate friend of Sir Harry Vane, and I don't see how I can ever get into the 'Descendants of Persons Who Were Acquainted With People Worth While' unless I can find out something about him."

"Are you sure there was such a man?"

"Of course I am. My mother was a

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Whicher. I have been all through the town history of Tinkleham, where he came from. We have two samplers at home, worked by his great-granddaughter. And I have hunted in the genealogies of the Diddleback family — he married a Diddleback, my grandfather always said, and in the genealogies of the Fritterleys and the Nynkums, because they were the most prominent families of Tinkleham.”

“What have you got there?”

“This? Oh, this is the town and court records of Footleboro’ — it is only three miles from Tinkleham, you know, and I thought I might find out something about him. Let me see, let me see — gracious, what fine print! There, here are the Whichers, lots of them. Andrew, Benjamin, Charles — why, here he is! Victory at last! ‘Whicher, Jabez.’ That’s the man! Now, page 719. Here we are!

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What's this — ' Site of the Old Pump ' ?
Why, what's the matter with this index?
It says page 719 clear enough. And, look
here, is n't this page 719? ”

“ Why, yes, it seems to be. I don't understand. Oh, this is it — that means paragraph 719. Look under that. There you are. What? ' June 2d, 1659, Jabez Whicher was accused before the justices of stealing sundry fowl and swine from several of the townsfolk, and he did plead that he was guilty, and was fined twelve pence, and sentenced to confinement in the jail for one year, and to be branded with the letter T on his right cheek.' Dear me, is that your ancestor? ”

“ Why no, certainly not; how ridiculous! Another person of the same name, of course.”

“ But it is a very unusual name.”

“ Not at all, Whicher is a common name

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—I mean, that is—I mean—oh, of course this is some one else.”

I cannot chronicle their conversation any further. Enough has been given to show you the nature of the annoyances to which I was subjected yesterday. I look to you, gentlemen, for relief.

Yours very truly,

OBADIAH WURZBERGER.

To the Board of Directors of the Blankville Public Library.

Gentlemen: I regret to hear from my colleague, Dr. O. Wurzberger, that you have denied his application for relief in the matter of conversation within the library alcoves. Dr. Wurzberger has been unable to work for over a week on account of the disturbing chatter that goes

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on in the alcove next to his, and yet you reply that conversation has always been allowed there, and that you do not see your way to forbidding it.

In order to show you that he is not alone in finding this conversation disturbing, I wish to state that I have been intolerably annoyed. I have been trying to work in the alcove on the other side of the one where the talking occurs. The first volume of my Arabic dictionary (on which I have been engaged continuously since 1867) is soon to appear, and I had hoped to devote a few weeks to a final revision. But how much I was able to accomplish to-day, for instance, you may see from this clack and chatter which took place within eight feet of me.

The first to begin, at half-past nine o'clock, were two youths. This is a literal account of what they said:

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"When is the exam?"

"September 22d."

"What in thunder are you beginning to grind now for?"

"Why, we are going to start for Squid Cove day after to-morrow, and we always stay till after Labor Day. Of course I shan't do any grinding down there; and then when we get back Pete Brown and I are going to take the car and go up to Lake George for the rest of the month — or till the exam, anyhow."

"So you've only got to-day and to-morrow?"

"That's all."

"Gee! What does the course cover?"

"English literature from Beowulf to the death of Swinburne."

"Know anything about it?"

"Not a damned thing."

"Know who Beowulf was?"

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“No, — I thought you were going to put me on to that.”

“Well, you know who Swinburne was, don’t you?”

“Sure thing; he wrote ‘The Blessed Damozel.’”

“Snappy work, old man. You came pretty near it, anyhow. Only, don’t put that in the exam. You won’t get asked many questions about modern writers, so don’t worry over them. Perhaps you’ll get one on Tennyson. Don’t say he lived in the Craigie House on Brattle street, and wrote ‘Evangeline,’ will you? Now, we might as well open the book, and take a chance anywhere. Here’s Milton. Ever hear of him?”

“John Milton, England’s greatest epic poet, was the son of a scrivener. He was born in 1608 in Grub Street, London. He lived there till he was sixteen, so it is pos-

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sible that his youthful eyes may have beheld Shakspeare, his only superior. He — ”

“ Well, well! Where did you get all this? ”

“ Wait a minute. Little did his worthy parents realize that their son was destined to write some of the most charming lyrics, the most powerful sonnets, and the greatest epic in the English language, and to lose his sight in — in — oh! I forget what he lost his sight in. But, say, how is that? Learned it this morning, while I was eating breakfast.”

“ Marvelous! But what was that about Grub Street? This book says Bread Street.”

“ Yes, that ’s right — Bread Street. Knew it was something about grub.”

“ Well, you better cut all that out about the street. You might get mixed again,

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and put it Pudding Lane. It does n't make a hit, anyhow. They would rather have some drool about his influence on literature, or something of that sort. They'll probably ask you to contrast 'L'Allegro' with 'Il Penseroso,' or describe his attitude toward the Presbyterians, or — ”

“ That 's all right — I 'm there with the goods. 'L'Allegro' describes the care-free life of the happy man — the philosophy falsely attributed to the followers of Epicurus, which is summed up in the maxim, 'Eat, drink and be merry,' more completely described in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. 'Il Penseroso,' on the other hand, is the thoughtful, sober student by no means to be confounded with the melancholy man, but, on the other hand — oh, I've got that down cold — I can go on that way for three pages.”

“ We'll let Milton alone, then. You

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seem to know everything to be known about him. How are you on Swift, Addison and that crowd? They always give you three or four questions about them."

"I've got to read over what that book says on that period. I am not very sure whether Swift or Defoe wrote the 'Tatler,' and those other things — they're all mixed up in my mind, anyway."

"How about Shakspeare?"

"Oh, yes. No one knows when he was born or died, what he did, or whether he wrote his plays or not."

"You'll get in trouble if you say that. I don't believe you will get any question about him. Here's Jane Austen."

"She was the woman that was married three or four times, and ought to have been two or three other times, wasn't she?"

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“No; you’ve mixed her with someone else. You ought to be able to discuss her style, and compare it with Charlotte Bronte’s. They’re dippy about Jane out there, so be sure and read her up. And don’t fail to express great admiration for Spenser, if you get a chance.”

“Was he the fellow who said we were all descended from monkeys?”

“No, no. What are you talking about? He was a poet — time of Shakspeare, or about then. You ought to read some of him. Read some of ‘The Shepherd’s Calendar’ and quote from it. You’ll hate it, but it will work a great swipe with the examiner.”

“Well, I’ll have to go along now. Mighty good of you to put me on to these points.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“Let’s see — Swift, Jane Austen and

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Spenser are the ducks you say I ought to look up? ”

“ Yes; and Addison and Marlowe. And say, find out something about Wordsworth. They ’ll ask about his attitude toward the French Revolution, or some damfool thing like that.”

“ All right, I will. What was his attitude toward it? ”

“ I don’t know. I had it all down fine once — when I took that exam. He liked it or else he didn’t, I forget which. But say, you want to know a little about Dryden and Pope, too.”

“ Dryden and Pope. All right, I got ’em on my list. I ’ll be able to write three pages about both of ’em before I go to bed. So long! ”

“ So long! ”

They parted; but the alcove was empty

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only three minutes. It was then occupied by a man and a woman. The woman began the conversation.

“Mrs. Brooks said I certainly ought to consult you, Mr. Wigglesworth. She said your knowledge of local history will be indispensable to us.”

“Now, I wonder if I understand you correctly. You and the other ladies of your club wish to give a pageant, illustrating past events in the history of the town?”

“That’s it, exactly. Now, we thought it would be so nice if we could have the visit of Lafayette to Blankville, for one thing. I am to be the Marquise de Lafayette, in a Louis Quinze gown and powdered hair.”

“Ah, yes. And your husband, I presume, will represent the marquis?”

“Daniel? Oh dear, no. Mr. Jones

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would never take any interest in it. He is so busy, you know. Dr. Peabody will be Lafayette."

"I see. Dr. Peabody will be Lafayette. I suppose, of course, that you wish to carry out the pageant with due regard for historical accuracy, correctness of costume, and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes. Certainly! That is what will make it so charming, and interesting, and picturesque, and er — er — educational. Dr. Peabody has picked out his costume already. He has spent hours over it. It is all white satin, high-heeled shoes, a jeweled sword, and a powdered wig. We thought we would represent the ball given to the marquis and marchioness by the leading citizens of the town. Then we could have a minuet, you know. Dr. Peabody dances so beautifully."

"Ah, yes. I see only one objection to

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this. From the point of view of historical truth, I mean. Lafayette did not visit Blankville on his first sojourn in this country."

"Oh, would that make any difference?"

"Well, it would, rather."

"I don't see why."

"Well, for one thing, when he did come here he was an old man. He was about old enough to be Dr. Peabody's grandfather, I should judge."

"Oh!"

"Furthermore, there was no ball given by the leading citizens, and no minuet."

"But there must have been something!"

"There was. The selectmen gathered at the post-house and presented an address of welcome."

"Well, why could n't we have that?"

"Undoubtedly you could. But it occurred at about nine o'clock on a rainy

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night. Lafayette did not alight from his coach, for he was trying to get on to Fairfield that night. He was suffering from a headache, and not only had on a nightcap, but had his head swathed in flannel bandages as well. He merely put out his head for a moment from the coach window, took the address, thanked the selectmen and immediately retired from view. There is no doubt at all about this, for Abner Willcox, the first historian of Blankville, was one of the selectmen."

"I don't see how we could have that very well."

"It is possible that you could persuade Dr. Peabody to appear in a nightcap and flannel bandages, but from what I know of the young man I should think it extremely doubtful."

"Well, it would not be picturesque!"

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"Possibly not; but it would be historically correct, which is even better."

"I do not think so. I do not believe that a pageant should follow the facts of history slavishly. The object is to reproduce in a beautiful manner the events of the past."

"Exactly so, Mrs. Jones. I have no objection to the beauty of the spectacle, but if the Historical Association, whose president and representative I am, are to contribute toward the pageant, I must insist upon some regard for historical truth."

"Well, what could we have? Are there not some events that would be suitable? Did not General Washington and Mrs. Washington visit our town?"

"They did not. They seem to have overlooked it."

"Was there never an Indian raid?"

"Yes; there was. In 1641."

"How would that do?"

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“ I will leave you to judge. The Indians — there were three of them — were all intoxicated. They endeavored to steal a horse, but were discovered by a servant girl of one Enoch Winslow, who owned the horse. She locked them up in the barn until the constable could come and take them to the village jail.”

“ It does not sound very dramatic.”

“ I am no judge of what is or is not dramatic, Mrs. Jones. I merely give you the facts. Possibly you might like to represent the landing of the first settlers.”

“ Yes; that sounds delightful.”

“ It was not a delightful occasion for the settlers. It is a matter of record that on landing they were instantly attacked by mosquitoes in such large numbers that they had to beat a hasty retreat to their ship.”

“ Perhaps we could have that and leave

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out the mosquitoes, — it would be hard to have them, anyway.”

“That would be impossible, madam. The modern school of history, of which I am a follower, allows the omission of no detail which makes for accuracy. Perhaps you would not be able to introduce the mosquitoes, though it might be managed. If not, I should insist that the persons representing the settlers beat their arms and hands about, and retreat to the vessel in evident distress.”

“It does seem hard to find anything. I must go now. I hope you will think it over, Mr. Wigglesworth. Good morning.”

These, gentlemen of the board, were the annoyances I suffered to-day. Can you do nothing to remedy this state of things?

Respectfully yours,

NICHOLAS JASPER, Ph.D.

THE LITERARY ZOO

THE LITERARY ZOO

“**T**HE idea is not exactly original,” I complained.

“Perhaps not,” Mr. Gooch replied, “at least, perhaps it is n’t wholly original in a general sense. Still, disregarding what private collectors may have done, I am sure this is the first public library to establish a literary-zoölogical annex on so extensive a scale. We aim at nothing less than completeness.”

“Oh! that is what you call it — a literary-zoölogical annex? I thought I had heard it called a literary zoo.”

“We think the other name a little more dignified. That is what it will be termed on the invitations. Let me see; I believe I sent you an advance invita-

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tion? They are not to be issued till next Monday."

He had sent me one, and I took it from my pocket and read it over again.

"The Public Library of East Caraway," it said, "requests the honor of your presence at the opening of its Literary-Zoölogical Annex, Thursday, September 1st, at ten o'clock A. M."

"We have to set that hour," Mr. Gooch explained, "because the animals are so much brighter then. In the afternoon they get sleepy, and at four o'clock, which is feeding time, they are noisy and quarrelsome. But come, we will go and inspect them."

He rose and led the way out of his office. We went through the delivery room, where a dozen or twenty people were waiting for books, and out through the stacks to the door of the big wooden an-

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nex. Mr. Gooch drew a bunch of keys from his pocket and unfastened the padlock.

“Of course you understand,” said he, as he pushed back the heavy doors, “there are still very many empty cages. Our collection is about one-fifth what we hope to have in two years. It is slow work, and most of the specimens are obtained only after long research and difficult negotiation. Some owners of the most desirable animals hold them at prices absolutely prohibitive to a library like ours. I could tell you of haggling and bargaining that we have done! Well, you would never believe, for instance, what the owner of the horse who brought the news from Ghent to Aix wants for him, and as for Circe’s swine — there are only two of them extant now — they might be made of pure gold, those pigs! But we have

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enough animals to make a respectable showing on opening day, I think, and I believe the collection will be decidedly educational in its effects."

Mr. Gooch has a firmer trust in the educational value of many things than I have been able to share, but I looked forward with great interest to this first view of his animals.

"This section is devoted to birds," said Mr. Gooch; "that swan floating around on the pool is the one who was once an ugly duckling; the cockatoo on the perch belonged to Count Fosco; and the red bird is, of course, the Kentucky Cardinal.

"One moment," I interposed, "how do you classify your animals? Not by authors, I take it?"

Mr. Gooch looked a little embarrassed. "Well, no," he admitted; "it was a very painful thing, for as a libra-

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rian I naturally wished to do everything according to library methods. But it was absolutely impossible. We tried it, and we had some harrowing experiences."

Mr. Gooch wiped his brow with his handkerchief.

"The Kipling section was a perfect pandemonium in no time," he went on, "there was a terrific battle between the tiger and one of the elephants. I thought the whole place would be torn to pieces. We got them separated somehow, and we saw then that it would be utterly impossible to classify by authors. In some cases it might be done, but we had to stick to one system or another, so we adopted the usual methods of the zoölogical museums — the birds by themselves, the carnivora together, and so on. It is hardly scholarly, I know, but we had to do it."

I could not deny that he had acted for

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the best. By way of changing the subject I asked him about a small bird of inconspicuous appearance.

“It is the nightingale that inspired John Keats,” he replied, “he sings sometimes, on moonlit nights. I can tell you, however, that the Ode is better than his song. The raven, sitting there on the pallid bust of Pallas, you will recognize without any difficulty. This other raven —”

“Belonged to Barnaby Rudge, I suppose?”

“No, *he* is owned by a private collector. This one flew and croaked ahead of Queen Guinevere, when she fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald, and heard the spirits of the waste and weald moan as she fled. Our ravens are not very cheerful birds. The other large, black bird is Solomon Caw, who lived in Ken-

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sington Gardens. There at the edge of the pool stands the Caliph Stork."

"And this hen?" I asked.

"That is Em'ly, who was once the object of attention from a Virginian. The other is the Little Red Hin."

"You will be able to make an addition to your poultry soon," I remarked.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, one Chantecler."

"Will we? I don't know. We don't go in for every animal that becomes notorious through advertising. Do you recognize the canary?"

"Little Nell's?"

"No, this one hung in the cabin of the brig Flying Scud. Here are the dogs — well penned, you see — I did n't intend that outrageous pun — because some of them are dangerous. This is Wolf, who once belonged to Rip Van Winkle. Many

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persons have the impression that his name is Snider. The bloodhound is one of those which pursued Eliza across the ice. There are many impostors, but our specimen is undoubtedly genuine."

"And the stuffed bloodhound?" I inquired.

"He was shot with a bottle of Daffy's Elixir by Micah Clarke. The other stuffed dog, that gigantic black one, is —"

"The Hound of the Baskervilles, of course!" I interrupted.

"Certainly; there are the marks of Sherlock Holmes's bullets. This fox terrier, who is so lively and amiable, is Montmorency, who once went on a trip with Three Men in a Boat. This stuffed pug, who looks flattened and damaged, is Wiloughby, who was killed by having a Fallen Idol tumble on him. The enormous St. Bernard is Porthos, who belonged to Peter

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Ibbetson, and that collie once had the extreme honor of being chased about in the snow and caught by Mr. Van Bibber."

We walked on, down the long passage, with cages on either side. On shelves, here and there, were animals, dead and stuffed. It had been impossible to procure them alive. Mr. Gooch pointed out a fox, who plainly had been cut in two. The stitches where the taxidermist sewed him together were easy to see. It was the fox, so the librarian told me, killed in Spain by the Brigadier Gerard.

"Here are the cats," announced Mr. Gooch, "and their characters vary. The Persian kitten, who is chasing her tail, has been celebrated in Rubaiyat. That large Tom is not named Tom, but Peter. He once had some painkiller administered to him by Tom Sawyer. The disagreeable

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looking creature belonged to Mr. Wilde, the repairer of reputations in 'The King in Yellow.' Perhaps you recognize the other?"

"It must be The Black Cat!" I exclaimed.

"It is, indeed," said Mr. Gooch. "Before we look at the horses, I want you to come into this little room. The collection here is unique — it cannot be approached by any other in the world. This large cage is intended for the Jabberwock — when we obtain him. In the meanwhile here are some Mome Raths — a sort of green pig who has lost his way, you know; two Borogoves and a Slithy Tove."

I gazed with feelings of deep emotion on the Slithy Tove — "something like a badger, something like a lizard, and something like a corkscrew." The two Borogoves, who were both very mimsy indeed,

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did not belie their reputation for looking like live mops.

“ This room is admirable! Have you any other animals in it? ”

“ Yes,” Mr. Gooch replied, “ here is the Pobble Who Has No Toes.”

“ The genuine Pobble? ”

“ Absolutely genuine. The veritable Pobble who went to fish for his Aunt Jobiska’s runcible cat with crimson whiskers. Over there you can see the Griffin who once carried a Minor Canon on his back. And beside him — ”

I saw a large and sulky-looking bird, seated in a chair, in a state of deep dejection and invalidism. His head was tied up, as if he were very ill.

“ Surely that is The Cockalorum.”

Mr. Gooch nodded.

“ Follow me, please. This room — ” he opened a door that led into what seemed

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to be a vast and absolutely empty apartment — “this room contains a Snark, and the Invisible Dog who figured in the Stories of Three Burglars. Beyond are some of the animals who once lived on a certain island with one Dr. Moreau. Would you like to see them?”

I shuddered and declined.

“Very well, then. We will return to the main building.”

We did so, and the librarian paused beside a small case. “Here is *The Gold Bug*. This caterpillar is the one that Sergeant Troy removed on the tip of his sword from the dress of Bathsheba Everdene. And the bees were of the swarm that traveled about with the Bee Man of Orn.”

The two cages beyond both contained large apes.

“Our orang-outangs,” remarked Mr. Gooch, “have decidedly bad reputations.

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The one on the right committed the murders in the Rue Morgue. The other is called Bimi—he belonged to a Frenchman named Bertran. The next cage has a miscellaneous assortment of Bander Log. Oh! here are some horses and cattle. The pony once belonged to Tom Bailey. This donkey was one of those which used to annoy Miss Betsy Trotwood. Priscilla Alden, on her wedding-day, rode on this white bull. The stuffed donkey is the one whose dead body lay once in the pathway of a traveler on a Sentimental Journey. And the other donkey was the foster-mother of the Luck of Roaring Camp.”

I pointed to some enormous and repulsive-looking crabs that were crawling about on the sand at the edge of a tank, and asked what they were. The librarian told me that they were from the subter-

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anean river over which Allan Quatermain and his friends traveled.

“But they,” said Mr. Gooch, “are nothing to the fellow in the next tank.”

I looked where he indicated and saw the most hideous monster it has ever been my bad luck to come across. It was a tremendous crab — the creature of a nightmare.

“It is one of those found on the shores of the Future by the traveler who voyaged on the Time Machine.”

“I think I have had enough of your aquariums,” I said.

“Just look at this. Here is the Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, whose name was Daniel Webster. He has recovered from his meal of birdshot, and can jump surprisingly. Oh! and over there is the Crocodile who swallowed an alarm clock.”

Mr. Gooch stopped before a row of ele-

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phants who were swaying about, eating hay, and requesting peanuts. I was shown Moti Guj, the mutineer, and the elephant on whose back Private Mulvaney once went for a ride. There was also Zenobia, who fell in love with a country doctor, and Her Ladyship's Elephant.

There were a number of tigers, including, of course, the ill-natured Shere Khan.

"The one in the second cage," said my guide, "is one of those hunted by Mr. Isaacs, when he was after a tiger-skin to present to Miss Westonhaugh."

But perhaps the most interesting of all was one which, so Mr. Gooch told me, had been confined in a cage beside a lady's apartment, to await the opening of a door by a young man. But Mr. Gooch was unable to tell me whether the man opened the door of the Lady or the Tiger.

Among the lions I saw the beast which

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fought with a crocodile in the presence of Leo Vincey and Horace Holly. A black panther was recognizable as Bagheera, and another, of the normal color, was the same animal who conceived a passion for a French soldier in the desert.

“Here are some smaller animals,” said Mr. Gooch; “do you know this fellow with the sharp nose?”

“It is a mongoose, is it not?”

“Yes; Rikki-tikki-tavi, himself. And these white mice belonged to Count Fosco, like the cockatoo. This mouse, alone by herself, was the pet of Barty Josselin.”

We moved on, but I began to look at my watch, for I had a train to catch.

“The snakes are an especially fine part of the collection,” Mr. Gooch remarked; “do you see this swamp adder? It is the Speckled Band, that gave Sherlock Holmes an uncomfortable five minutes. That little

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coral snake in the pickle bottle was responsible for the death of one Reingelder. The two rattlesnakes were intimates of Elsie Venner, and in that cage you may see Kaa, the great rock python. But here is a greater prize than any."

He indicated an extraordinary and beautiful serpent, at which I looked with the greatest surprise and wonder.

"She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or inter-wreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries —
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar;
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls
complete."

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"That," said the librarian, "I consider the gem of the collection."

"It is truly," I replied, "but I think it a profanation to have poor Lamia here."

"You don't consider —" began Mr. Gooch.

"Yes, I do. And I must hurry now, for it is nearly train time. I am deeply indebted to you for this sight of your animals, and I hope your opening day will be a great success. It is my advice to you not to let any nervous persons see those crabs, though."

"Just a minute. We have a rhinoceros here, who got cake-crumbs inside his skin. His name is Strorks, and —"

"Thank you very much; but I really must hurry. Good-by."

"Good-by."

And I went out and left him beside the rhinoceros.

THEIR JUST REWARD

THEIR JUST REWARD

I LOOKED and beheld, and there were a vast number of girls standing in rows. Many of them wore pigtails, and most of them chewed gum.

“Who are they?” I asked my guide.

And he said: “They are the girls who wrote ‘Lovely’ or ‘Perfectly sweet’ or ‘Horrid old thing!’ on the fly-leaves of library books. Some of them used to put comments on the margins of the pages — such as ‘Served him right!’ or ‘There! you mean old cat!’”

“What will happen to them?” I inquired.

“They are to stand up to the neck in a lake of ice cream soda for ten years,” he answered.

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“That will not be much of a punishment to them,” I suggested.

But he told me that I had never tried it, and I could not dispute him.

“The ones over there,” he remarked, pointing to a detachment of the girls who were chewing gum more vigorously than the others, “are sentenced for fifteen years in the ice cream soda lake, and moreover they will have hot molasses candy dropped on them at intervals. They are the ones who wrote:

If my name you wish to see
Look on page 93,

and then when you had turned to page 93, cursing yourself for a fool as you did it, you only found:

If my name you would discover
Look upon the inside cover,

and so on, and so on, until you were ready

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to drop from weariness and exasperation. Hang me!" he suddenly exploded, "if I had the say of it, I'd bury 'em alive in cocoanut taffy—I told the Boss so, myself."

I agreed with him that they were getting off easy.

"A lot of them are named 'Gerty,' too," he added, as though that made matters worse.

Then he showed me a great crowd of older people. They were mostly men, though there were one or two women here and there.

"These are the annotators," he said, "the people who work off their idiotic opinions on the margins and fly-leaves of books. They dispute the author's statements, call him a liar and abuse him generally. The one on the end used to get all the biographies of Shakspeare he could find

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and cover every bit of blank paper in them with pencil-writing signed 'A Baconian.' He usually began with the statement: 'The author of this book is a pig-headed fool.' The man next to him believed that the earth is flat, and he aired that theory so extensively with a fountain-pen that he ruined about two hundred dollars' worth of books. They caught him and put him in jail for six months, but he will have to take his medicine here just the same. There are two religious cranks standing just behind him. At least, they were cranks about religion. One of them was an atheist and he used to write blasphemy all over religious books. The other suffered from too much religion. He would jot down texts and pious mottoes in every book he got hold of. He would cross out, or scratch out all the oaths and cuss words in a book; draw a pencil line through any

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reference to wine, or strong drink, and call especial attention to any passage or phrase he thought improper by scrawling over it. He is tied to the atheist, you notice. The woman in the second row used to write 'How true!' after any passage or sentence that pleased her. She gets only six years. Most of the others will have to keep it up for eight."

"Keep what up?" I asked.

"Climbing barbed-wire fences," was the answer; "they don't have to hurry, but they must keep moving. They begin to-morrow at half-past seven."

We walked down the hill toward a group of infamous looking people. My guide stopped and pointed toward them.

"These are snippers, cutters, clippers, gougers and extra-illustrators. They vary all the way from men who cut 'want ads' out of the newspapers in the reading-

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rooms, to those who go into the alcoves and lift valuable plates by the wet-string method. You see they come from all classes of society — and there are men and women, girls and boys. You notice they are all a little round-shouldered, and they keep glancing suspiciously right and left. This is because they got into the habit of sinking down in their chairs to get behind a newspaper, and watching to see if anyone was looking. There is one man who was interested in heraldry. He extended his operations over five or six libraries, public and private. When they found him out and visited his room it looked like the College of Heralds. He had a couple of years in prison, but here he is now, just the same. The man next to him is — well, no need to mention names, — you recognize him. Famous millionaire and politician. Never went into a library but once in his

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life. Then he went to see an article in a London newspaper, decided he wanted to keep it, and tore out half the page. Library attendant saw him, called a policeman, and tried to have him arrested. You see, the attendant didn't know who he was."

"Did anything come of it?" I asked.

"Yes," replied the guide, "there did. The library attendant was discharged. Blank simply told the Board of Trustees that he had been insulted by a whipper-snapper who did n't look as if he had ever had a square meal in his life. One or two of the board wanted to investigate, but the majority would have jumped through hoops if Blank had told them to. He is in this section for five years, but he has over eight hundred to work off in other departments. The men on the end of the line, five or six dozen of them, used to cut plates

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out of the art magazines — a common habit. Woman standing next, used to steal sermons. Man next but one to her was a minister. He was writing a book on the Holy Land, and he cut maps out of every atlas in a library. Said he did n't mean to keep them long."

This group interested me, and I wondered what was to be done with them.

"You will see in a minute," said the guide; "they are going to begin work right away."

As he spoke, a number of officials came down the hill with enormous sheets of sticky fly-paper. These were distributed among the "snippers, cutters, clippers, gougers and extra-illustrators," who there-upon set to work with penknives, cutting small bits out of the fly-paper. In a few minutes the wretched creatures were cov-

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ered from head to foot with pieces of the horrible stuff; pulling it off one hand to have it stick on the other, getting it in their hair, on their eyebrows, and plastering themselves completely.

“That is not very painful,” I observed.

“No,” said my companion, “perhaps not. Gets somewhat monotonous after four years, though. Come over to the end of this valley. I want you to see a dinner party that is taking place.”

We left the sticky fly-paper folks behind us, and proceeded through the valley. On the side of the hill I noticed a small body of people, mostly men.

The guide pointed over his shoulder at them, remarking: “Reformed Spellers.”

They were busily engaged in clipping one another's ears off with large scissors. There was a sign on the hill beside them. It read:

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EARS ARE UNNECESSARY. WHY NOT GET RID OF THEM? LEAVE ENUF TO HEAR WITH. DON'T STOP TIL YOU ARE THRU.

At the end of the valley there was a large level space. Something like a picnic was going on. People were eating at hundreds of little tables, and some were dancing, or strolling about on the grass. The guide stopped.

“The Boss is prouder of this than of anything else in the whole place,” he said. “The people who are giving this party are the genealogists. Nearly all women, you notice. These are the folks who have driven librarians to profanity and gray hairs. Some of them wanted ancestors for public and social reasons; some of them for historical or financial purposes; some merely to gratify personal pride or private curiosity. But they all wanted ancestors for one reason or another, and ancestors

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they *would* have. For years they charged into libraries demanding ancestors. Over there, you see that big crowd? They are the two hundred and fifty thousand lineal descendants of William Brewster. Next to them are six thousand rightful Lords Baltimore. That vast mob beginning at the big tree, and extending for six miles to the northeast are the John Smith and Pocahontas crowd — some descended from one and some from the other — we have n't got them sorted out yet."

"How many of them are there?" I demanded.

"According to our best estimates," he replied, "in the neighborhood of eight million at present; but of course we are receiving fresh additions all the time. Thirty-five hundred came in last month. There is no time to count them, however."

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I laughed at this.

“Time!” I exclaimed, “why, you’ve got eternity!”

But he merely waved his hand and went on.

“They are the largest crowd here, anyway, with the possible exception of the Mayflower descendants. They have a whole valley to themselves, beyond the second hill. Some say there are twelve million of them, but no one knows. Recently they applied for another valley, for theirs is full. You see it is so thickly planted with family trees that they have to live in deep shade all the time, and it is very damp and chilly. Then there are upwards of three hundred thousand tons of grandfather’s clocks, brass warming-pans, cradles, chairs and tables, so they hardly can find standing room.”

We walked down amongst the people

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who were giving the picnic. I wanted to see what was the object of this lawn party, for it struck me that it looked more like the Elysian Fields than any other place.

I soon discovered my mistake. Near the first group of tables was a sign with the inscription: "Grand Dames of the Pequot War," and at one of the tables sat Mrs. Cornelia Crumpet. I remembered the hours I had spent hunting up two ancestors to enable Mrs. Crumpet to join the Grand Dames. I had found them at last, and so, apparently, had Mrs. Crumpet, for there could be no doubt that the pair of sorry-looking rascals whom she was entertaining at luncheon were the long-lost ancestors. One of them was the most completely soiled individual I have ever seen. He was eating something or other, and he did not waste time with forks or any other implements. The other had finished his meal, and was

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leaning negligently back in his chair. He was smoking a large pipe, and he had his feet on the table.

Mrs. Crumpet wore an expression that showed that her past desire to discover these ancestors was as a passing whim, compared with her present deep, overpowering anxiety to be rid of them. I felt sorry for the poor lady; but she was not alone in her misery. All about her were Grand Dames of the Pequot War, engaged in entertaining their ancestors. Some of the ancestors were more agreeable, some far more distasteful to their descendants than Mrs. Crumpet's pair. None of the Grand Dames seemed to be having what could be called a jolly time.

My guide at last led me through the maze of tables and out into the open.

"We have a good many Japanese visitors in this section," said he. "They come

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to get some points from the Americans on ancestor-worship."

"What do they say?" I asked him.

"They just giggle and go away," he replied.

Beyond the genealogists we found a large group of people, who, the guide said, were the persons who borrow books and never return them. The complainants, in their case, were mainly private individuals rather than public libraries.

"They are not particularly interesting," remarked the guide, "but their punishment will appeal to you."

As we passed them I shuddered to see that they were all engaged in filing catalogue cards in alphabetical order.

"How long do they have to keep that up?" was my question, and I was horrified to learn that the terms varied from twenty to thirty-five years.

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“Why, that is the most damnable thing I ever heard,” I said — “the sticky fly-paper folks were nothing to this!”

The guide shrugged his shoulders — “It’s the rule,” he said.

The next lot of people we came on were curiously engaged. Long lines of bookshelves were set up about them, and they wandered up and down, forever taking a book from the shelf, only to sigh and put it back again. As we came amongst them I could see the cause of their weariness. The shelves seemed to be lined with the most brilliant looking books in handsome bindings. They were lettered in gold: “Complete Works of Charles Dickens,” “Works of Dumas, Edition de Luxe,” “Works of Scott,” and so on. Yet when I took one of the books in my hand to look at it, it was no book at all, but just a wooden dummy, painted on the back, but

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absolutely blank everywhere else. They were like the things used by furniture dealers to put in a bookcase to make it look as if it were full of books, or those used on the stage, when a library setting is required. There were many cords of wood, but there was not a real book in any of the cases.

I asked one of the sufferers why he was doing this, and he stopped for a moment his patrol, and turned his weary eyes upon me.

"We are all alike," he said, indicating his associates. "We are the literary bluffers. Most of us were rich — I was, myself," and he groaned heavily. "We bought books by the yard — expensive ones, always — editions de luxe, limited editions — limited to ten thousand sets and each set numbered, of which this is No. 94," he added in a dull, mechanical

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fashion, as though he were repeating a lesson. "We were easy marks for all the dealers and agents. Especially illustrated editions, with extra copies of the engravings in a portfolio; bindings in white kid, or any other tomfool nonsense was what we were always looking for. And they saw that we got them. Whispered information that this set of Paul de Kock or Balzac was complete and unexpurgated, and that if we would buy it for \$125, the publishers would throw in an extra volume, privately printed, and given away to purchasers, since it was against the law to sell it — this was the sort of bait we always bit at — cheerily! And now here we are!"

And he began again his tramp up and down, taking down the wooden dummies and putting them back again, with dolorous groans.

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I could not stand this dismal spectacle very long, so we hurried on to a crowd of men bent nearly double over desks. They were pale and emaciated, which my guide told me was due to the fact that they had nothing to eat but paper.

“They are bibliomaniacs,” he exclaimed, “collectors of unopened copies, seekers after misprints, measurers by the millimetre of the height of books. They are kept busy here reading the Seaside novels in paper covers. Next to them are the bibliographers — compilers of lists and counters of fly leaves. They cared more for a list of books than for books themselves, and they searched out unimportant errors in books and rejoiced mightily when they found one. Exactitude was their god, so here we let them split hairs with a razor and dissect the legs of fleas.”

In a large troop of school children —

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a few hundred yards beyond, I came across a boy about fifteen years old. I seemed to know him. When he came nearer he proved to have two books tied around his neck. The sickly, yellowish-brown covers of them were disgustingly familiar to me — somebody's geometry and somebody else's algebra. The boy was blubbering when he got up to me, and the sight of him with those noxious books around his neck made me sob aloud. I was still crying when I awoke.

THE CROWDED HOUR

THE CROWDED HOUR

(Scene: The Circulating Department of the —— Public Library. Time: Four o'clock of a Saturday afternoon in the winter. Miss Randlett and Miss Vanderpyl, library assistants, are taking in books returned, and issuing others to a group of persons, varying in number from ten to fifty. The group includes men and women, youths and maidens,—a number of high-school students being conspicuous. Edgar, Alfred, and Dan—library pages—going forward and back from the desk to the book-stack, fetching books called for. Sometimes they bring only the call-slips with the word "OUT" stamped thereon. A sign on the desk bears the inscription: "Please look up the call numbers of any books that you wish in the card catalogue. Write the numbers on a call-slip, and present the slip at this desk." About fifty per cent of the people pay no attention whatever to the sign.)

A SMALL man in a large ulster, addressing Miss Vanderpyl, in honeyed tones: "Oh, pardon me! Have you 'The Blandishments of Belinda' in this library?"

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Miss V. (working with both hands at once, charging books, and trying to keep thirty-seven people from becoming impatient): "Er — I — am not sure. Who is the author?"

The small man (bowing gracefully, with the tips of his fingers on his heart): "I, who now address you, Madam."

Miss V. (after wondering vainly what light this answer throws on her difficulty, and seeking for a reply which shall not seem impertinent): "I really am not sure, — probably we have it. Would you mind looking it up in the catalogue, please?"

The small man: "I beg pardon?"

Miss V. (indicating): "In the catalogue, — over there."

The small man: "Oh, those *horrid* cards? Dear me! I would never think of entangling myself in their *dreadful*

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meshes! I fear I might never survive it, you know. Is there no other way? Ah, red tape! red tape!”

(He hovers about for an instant, and then flits away.)

A very large woman, with an armful of bundles (depositing six books on the desk with a crash, and heaving a sigh that scatters the call-slips and memoranda right and left): “*There!* If my arms ain’t nearly fallin’ off! Say, you oughta give shawl-straps to carry these books with. Now, here’s ‘The Life Beautiful,’ — I wanta return that, and ‘The Romance of Two Worlds’ an’ ‘Cometh up as a Flower,’ — why, no, it ain’t either, — it’s ‘Family Hymns’ — if I ain’t gone and picked that up off the settin’-room table and lugged it all this way, an’ I *told* Hattie to keep her hands off them books, — well, I’ll put it back in my bag — here, young man! you

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leave that alone — that don't belong to the liberry. Now, here 's this, an' this, an' I want this swapped onto this card, an' this one I want renood an' I wanta get ' Airy, Fairy Lilian ' an' — oh, Lord! there goes my macaroni onto the floor, — all smashed to smithereens, I s'pose — no, 't ain't, either, — thank you, young man! Now, if you 'll just — ”

A high school student: “ Can I get a copy of ‘ The Merchant of Venice,’ the Rolfe edition? ”

The very large woman: “ Now, just you wait a minute, young feller! One at a time, here! ”

Miss V. (at last making herself heard): “ These books which you want to return should go over to *that* desk.”

The very large woman: “ What? Oh, Lord, I forgot! That 's so, ain't it? Well, I'll take 'em over, but say, jus' let me

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leave my bundles here a minute — I'll be right back."

(She departs, leaving a package of macaroni, two dozen eggs, and a black string bag to help cover the already crowded desk.)

An old gentleman (holding a call-slip in both hands, and looking at Miss V. over his eye-glasses): "This says that President Lowell's book on the government of England is 'out.' Do you mean to say that you own only *one* copy of such an important work?"

Edgar: "No, sir, we got two, but they're all out."

The old gentleman: "Well, two, then! Why, I daresay you have half a dozen of some trashy novel or other. Why, do you know that the author is President of Harvard University?"

Edgar (quite cheerfully): "No, sir."

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The old gentleman: "Well, he is! Your librarian ought to be told of this. Where is he? I shall enter a complaint."

A woman with poppies on her hat: "How do you do, Miss Vanderpyl? You're looking so well! You've *quite* recovered from that dreadful illness you had last fall? I'm so glad! Now, I've brought you something."

(She extends an envelope, which Miss V., who has a book in one hand, and a combination pencil and dating-stamp in the other, takes between the last two fingers of her right hand.)

The woman with poppies: "Those are two tickets for the reception that is going to be given this evening by the Grand Dames of the Pequot War. It's *very* exclusive, and the tickets are awfully hard to get. I felt sure you'd like to go and take a friend. They are not giving the

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tickets away to everyone, I can assure you. Oh, is n't that 'The Long Roll' over there on that desk? I do so want to read that, and they say there is n't a single copy in, except that one. You'll just let me take it, won't you?"

Miss V.: "Why, I'm awfully sorry! That copy is reserved for someone, — she paid for the post-card notice, you know, and we've written her that the book is here. I'm very sorry!"

The woman with poppies: "Oh, is that so?"

(She reaches over, and deftly withdraws the envelope from Miss V.'s fingers, and replaces it in her card-case. Then she speaks again:)

"I am so sorry. Perhaps you won't be able to go to the reception this evening, anyhow. Good afternoon, Miss Vanderpyl, good afternoon."

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

(And she goes out, smiling sweetly.)

Two high-school students, at once:
“Can I get ‘The Merchant of Venice’
in the Rolfe edition?”

Edgar (to Miss V.): “There’s a man
here that wants ‘The Only Way.’”

Miss V.: “Perhaps he means ‘A
Tale of Two Cities,’ — there’s a dra-
matic version —”

A thin young man: “Your open-shelf
department is a fine idea, fine! I have been
able to select my own books; I like such
a liberal policy; it shows —”

A man with a portfolio: “Look here,
miss, here’s the best chance you ever see
in your life: the complete Speeches of
William J. Bryan, bound in purple plush,
for six dollars, but we can let you have two
copies for nine seventy five, ev’ry lib’ry in
the country’s got it, and Andrew Carnegie
ordered five —”

THE CROWDED HOUR

Edgar: "That man says he don't want the 'Tale of Two Cities,' — he thinks the book he's after is 'How To Get In' or something like that."

Miss V.: "He means 'One Way Out,' — see if there is a copy in, will you?"

A woman: "Just let me take that pencil of yours, a minute?"

A man (mopping his brow): "Say, what's this 'open-shelf' business, — d'ye have to find your own books? Well, that's the worst thing I ever saw, — why, at the Boston Public Library they get 'em for you!"

A teacher: "Now, I want to return these three, please, and this is to be transferred to Miss Jimson's card, — she'll be here in a minute, and then I want these two renewed, and I want to get 'The Century of the Child,' and if that is n't in I want —"

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

Miss V.: "Return the books at the other desk, please. . . . Oh, would you mind returning my pencil?"

The teacher: "Oh, yes, how stupid of me!"

A woman leading a child: "Haf you de Deutsches Balladenbuch?"

Miss V.: "Will you look it up in the catalogue, please? Over there. . . . yes, — look up the author's name, just like a dictionary."

A man: "They tell me in the reading-room that you don't have Victoria Cross's novels in the library. Now, I would like to know why that is!"

Miss V.: "You will have to ask the librarian about it, — I have nothing to do with buying the books."

The man: "That's what they told me in the reading-room, and I tried to see him, but he is n't in. Everyone trying to dodge

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responsibility, I guess. It makes me sick the way these libraries are run." (Addressing the public generally:) "What right have these library people, — paid public servants, public employees, that 's all they are — what right have they to dictate what I shall read? Why, her novels are reviewed in all the best papers on the other side."

A voice from the rear of the crowd: "Why don't you do something about it?"

The man: "Well, I'm going to, by George!"

(He goes away, muttering.)

The woman with the child (returning triumphant): "Ha! I haf her! Here she iss!"

(She extends the catalogue card, which she has ripped forcibly from its drawer. Miss Wilkins, head cataloguer of the library, who happens to be passing at that

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moment, sees the incident, and sits down suddenly on a bench, and has recourse to smelling salts.)

An imposing personage (who has stalked out from the reference room bearing a Spanish dictionary, and is followed excitedly by Miss Barnard, the reference librarian): "I want to borrow this dictionary until next Tuesday, and that woman in there says I can't, just because it says 'Ref.' on it. *I won't hurt it!*"

Miss V.: "Those books are not allowed to go out of the library."

The personage: "Why not?"

Miss V.: "They are reference books, — they are to be used in that room only."

The personage: "Who made that rule?"

Miss V.: "The trustees, I suppose, — it is one of the rules of the library."

The personage: "Well, I know Colonel Schwartz!"

THE CROWDED HOUR

Miss V.: "Well, if you will get his permission, you may take the book, — I am not allowed to give it out."

(The personage lays the book on the desk, from which it is quickly recovered by Miss Barnard, who hastens back to the reference room with it.)

The personage: "I've got to get something like that, — I had a letter from Havana this morning, and I want to find out what it means."

Miss V.: "Oh, we have some books which will do for that, I think." (To Alfred, the page.) "Get one of those Spanish grammars, Alfred, — be sure and see that there's a vocabulary in it."

(Alfred returns presently with a grammar. Miss V. extends her hand for the personage's library card. The personage looks at her helplessly, and finally shakes hands with her, remarking: "Oh,

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that's all right, miss, — don't mention it!")

Miss V. (becoming rather red): "Your card?"

The personage (mystified): "Card?"

Miss V.: "Yes, your library card, — have n't you one?"

The personage: "You can search me!"

Miss V.: "Why, I can't give you a book unless you have a card, — have n't you ever borrowed books from the library?"

The personage: "Never in my life."
(Suddenly exploding.) "Great Scott! I never saw so much red tape in my life."

Miss V.: "Well, here —"

(And she breaks a library rule herself, by getting the name and address of the personage, and giving him the book, charged on her own card. But she gets rid of him at last.)

A man, with a confidential manner

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(leaning over the desk, and whispering):

“ Say, lady, I want to get a book.”

Miss V.: “ What book do you want? ”

The confidential man (pursing up his lips, and nodding his head, as if to tip her the wink): “ Why, — er, why, — *that same one*, yer know! ”

(Miss V. looks at him carefully, but as she cannot distinguish him amongst the forty thousand persons who have entered the library during the past year, she is forced to make further inquiries.)

Miss V.: “ Which same one? I don’t remember — ”

The confidential man: “ Why, *you* know! ” (His manner indicates that it is a delicate personal secret between Miss V. and himself.) “ That one I had last summer, yer know.”

Miss V.: “ What was the title? ”

The confidential man: “ The title? —

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Oh, the *name* of it? ” (He regards Miss V. with the tolerant air of one who is humoring a person whose curiosity verges on the impertinent.) “ Hoh! the *name* of it! I’ve clean forgot *that*!”

(Having thus brushed aside her trivial question, he regards the ceiling and awaits the arrival of the book.)

Miss V.: “ Who was the author — who wrote it? ”

(The confidential man is now convinced that Miss V., for some playful reason of her own, is merely trying to keep him at the desk,—that she has the book within reach, but chooses to be kittenish about it. He smiles pleasantly at her.)

The confidential man: “ Lord, I dunno! — Just let me have it, will yer? ” (He is still quite agreeable — as if he were saying: “ Come, come, young lady, I know it’s very nice to string out this con-

THE CROWDED HOUR

versation, but, after all, business is business! Let me have my book, for I must be going.”)

Miss V.: “I’m afraid I can’t give it to you unless you can tell me something more about it, — something definite. We have over four hundred thousand books in this library, you know, and if you don’t recall the author or the title — ”

(The confidential man receives the news about the four hundred thousand books with the air of a person listening to a fairy tale. The idea that there are as many books as that in the whole world, to say nothing of one library, strikes him as it would if Miss V. should tell him that she is the rightful Queen of England.)

Miss V.: “Can’t you tell me about the book, — what it was about, I mean?”

The confidential man (beginning to

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lose his patience, at last): "*About?* Why, it was about a lot of things!"

Miss V.: "Was it fiction — a novel?"

The confidential man: "Huh?"

Miss V.: "Was it a story? or a book of travels —"

(The confidential man gazes at her with oystery eyes. Suddenly he becomes more animated.)

The confidential man: "There! It looked just like that!"

(He points across the desk at a novel bound in the uniform style of the library bindery, from which six thousand volumes, bound precisely alike, come every year.)

Miss V.: "Is that it?" (She hands him the book.)

The confidential man: "No, no. Oh, no. Nothin' like it." (He puts it down, and wanders away, thinking that he will

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come back when there is some intelligent attendant at the desk.)

An excited person: "Look here, I've been reading those names on the ceiling, and Longfellow's is n't there! Now, I'd like to know why that is!"

Another man: "And they have n't got 'The Appeal to Reason' in the reading room."

Another man: "That's because it's Carnegie's library, ain't it, miss?"

Miss V.: "No, — he has nothing to do with the library at all."

The man: "Why, I thought he run it, don't he?"

Miss V.: "He gave the money for the building, — that is all. He has never been in it, nor seen it, so far as I know."

The man: "That's all right! I guess you'll find he runs it, just the same."

The first man: "I guess so, too."

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Miss V.: "It must keep him rather busy, don't you think, running all his libraries?"

The man: "Oh, he can have people in his pay, all right."

(He and his friend gaze about, to see if they can detect any of these secret agents. They both look suspiciously toward Miss Randlett at the return desk.)

The very large woman (who has returned to gather up her macaroni, her two dozen eggs, and her black bag, and to have her books charged): "Now, here I am at last! I could n't get 'Airy, Fairy Lilian,' but here's 'She Walks in Beauty,' an' 'Miss Petticoats,' an' you can put *that* on my card, an' here's Minnie's card for *that*, an' if you'll just put the eggs in my bag, I'll be all right."

TO A SMALL LIBRARY PATRON

TO A SMALL LIBRARY PATRON

UNCOMBED, a bit unwashed, with freckled
face,

And slowly moving jaws — implying gum;
A decade's meagre dignity of years
Upon your head — your only passports these,
All unconcerned you enter — Fairyland!

For here dwell monstrous Jinn, and great birds
fly

Through haunted valleys sown with diamonds.
Here Rumpelstiltskin hides his secret name,
The talking Flounder comes at beck and call,
The King of Lilliput reviews his troops,
The Jabberwock and Bandersnatch cavort,
And mice and pumpkin change to coach and
four.

Once more for you is Sherwood's forest green,
Where arrows hiss and sword and shield re-
sound;

Within these walls shall you and Crusoe stand
Aghast, to see the footprint on the beach;
From here you start your journey to the Moon,

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

Cruise on the raft with Huckleberry Finn,
Or sentinel the mouth of Cudjo's Cave.

Here, when your years have doubled, shall you
see

King Henry and his men on Crispin's Day,
The Scottish thane hold parley with the hags,
Sir Richard Grenville fight the Spanish fleet,
Great Hector and Achilles face to face!
This is your Palos whence you turn your prow
To sail uncharted seas and find strange isles.
Here shall you stand with brave Leonidas;
Here watch old Davy Crockett fight and fall.
Amid these dusty shelves you 'll see the glow
When Paul Jones lights his battle-lanterns here;
Muskets shall roar and tomahawks shall flash
In many deep and dismal forest glades.
Here shall you see the Guillotine at work!
And mark the Sun of Austerlitz arise.
Again, you 'll bide the Redcoats on the Hill,
Or watch the fight on Cemetery Ridge.

But you—with tousled hair and stockings
torn,

Irreverent and calm and unabashed,
Intent on swiping Billy Johnson's cap—
You pass the magic portal unaware,
And, careless, saunter into lands of gold.

BY-WAYS AND HEDGES

BY-WAYS AND HEDGES

FERNALD got off the trolley car and looked about for Graham House. He did not have to look long, for on the steps of a brick building there were thirty to fifty children waiting for the settlement library to open. That event ought to happen at seven o'clock, and the illuminated dial on the fire engine house, across the street, now indicated five minutes of seven. Fernald went up the steps, through the crowd, and turned to the right into the library room. There was a confusion of noises — two or three nervous giggles and snickers, a loud shuffling of feet, and a few articulate questions.

“Where's the teacher?”

“Ain't the teacher comin'?”

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

“Mister, you ain’t got the lady’s job away from her, have yer?”

And then, apparently in derogation of the last inquiry: “Shut up, you!”

Fernald took off his coat and left it on a bench. Then he unlocked the book-cases, which were instantly surrounded by a hungry swarm. He took the boxes of card records from a shelf, and established himself with rubber stamp, pencil, and pen at the smaller table. A few children already sat about the larger table, looking at the worn copies of “Puck” and “Collier’s.” A freckled-faced girl, about twelve years old, came behind the table and whispered confidentially into his ear:

“Ain’t the real teacher comin’, Mister?”

“Yes,” explained Fernald, “she is coming in about half an hour. You can get your books from me until she comes.”

BY-WAYS AND HEDGES

“ Oh! ”

There was deep, Christian resignation in the tone, and Fernald felt the rebuke. At the main library he was superior in station to the “ real teacher,” but here his evident inferiority was painful. But he had no time to dwell on it, for there were at least seventeen children, both boys and girls, from ten to sixteen years old standing about him on three sides, and all holding one or two books toward him. He tried to remember Miss Grant’s (the “ real teacher’s ”) final instructions.

“ Five cents a week on all books which have been kept out longer than two weeks. Don’t give back any cards which have ‘ Fine due ’ stamped on them. If any of them ask for new cards, give them a guarantor’s slip, tell them to fill it out, get it signed by some grown person whose name is in the directory, and bring it back

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next week. Look out for Minnie Leboskey, she owes fifteen cents and will try to get her card back. Don't lose your temper with them—they all behave pretty well, but if any of the boys throw snowballs in at the top of the window get Mr. Flaherty, the janitor, to drive them away."

He looked into the numerous faces, wondering if the nefarious Minnie Leboskey were there. In the meanwhile he was mechanically taking in the books, stamping the cards, and handing them back. He noticed that his fingers grew very sticky in the process. Most of the children brought another book to the desk with the one they were returning. This was one they had already selected from the shelves, and they now desired to exchange it for the books they handed in. Sometimes their preconceived schemes

BY-WAYS AND HEDGES

were confusing to the substitute librarian, as when, for instance:

Theresa Sullivan returned two books, one of which was to be re-issued immediately to Margaret Clancy, while the other was to be charged on the card of Nora Clancy, who was sick with ammonia and so could n't come to the library that evening. But the book which Margaret returned must be loaned to Theresa — that is, one of them must be, while the other was to be given into the keeping of Mary Finnegan, who, in her turn, brought back three books (two on her own cards, and one on her mother's), and her mother wanted the book that Eustacia O'Brien had returned (there it is, right on the desk in front of you — that 's Eustacia over there at the water-cooler), and please, Mary Finnegan herself wants this book that Mary Divver has just

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brought in on her white card, and on her blue card she wants the one she is going to get (if sundry elbow jabs in the ribs will have any effect) from Agnes Casey, and that ain't nothin' on the cover except a teeny little piece of tolu gum, and Nellie Sullivan wants to know if "Little Women" is in, and if it is n't will you please pick something out for her, Mister, 'cause she has tried four times to get "Little Women," and please give me this book that Lizzie Brady has just brought in on my white card, and this is my blue card, and my father says that this book on electric door-knobs ain't no good and he wants another.

After twenty uninterrupted minutes of this sort of thing Fernald (who had once pitched for his class nine and stood calm while the sophomores exploded bunches of cannon crackers around him and

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sprayed him with a garden hose) felt inclined to jump up and roar :

“ For God’s sake, hold your tongues ! ”

He did nothing of the sort, however, for at that moment a scuffle broke out at the bookcase between two boys. He left his table long enough to separate the boys and tell them to stop fighting or he would put them out.

He could n’t help remembering Miss Grant and her associate, Miss French, who, after eight hours in the main library during the day, came over here each Thursday evening for the mere love of it.

The chief librarian had visited the place once — a year ago, coming at half-past eight, when all was orderly and quiet. He looked blandly around for a few moments and then went away. A few weeks later he included in his annual report a per-

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functory sentence about the faithful service of the two young women.

Miss Grant came at about half-past seven, and Fernald turned the desk over to her.

“I wish you would get that red-haired girl a ‘sad book,’” he remarked; “she has been after me ever since I arrived for a ‘sad book.’ Have you anything sufficiently mournful?”

Miss Grant thought she could supply the need, but Fernald did not learn what the book was, for, as she came back from the shelves, she remarked:

“I am afraid that boy needs watching. He comes here only for mischief — never takes any books.”

She indicated a tall, lank youth of unpleasant countenance, and about fifteen years old. He was sitting at the center table, moving the magazines about, and

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watching the librarians out of the corners of his eyes.

"Have you had trouble with him before?" asked Fernald.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Grant, "he tripped me up last Thursday night."

"*What?* Tripped you up?"

"Yes — stuck out his foot as I went by the table with an armful of books. I fell and spilled the books all over the floor."

"Why, the young pup! Shall I put him out?"

"No; he has n't done anything to-night."

At this moment the boy seized a magazine and rapidly slapped three smaller boys over the head with it. One of the little boys began to cry, and Mr. Fernald, remarking, "I guess that will do, won't it?" conducted the perpetrator of the offence to the outer door.

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As soon as he felt the grip on his collar relax, the boy ran to the middle of the street, and armed himself, not with the gentle snowball, but with four or five of the hard lumps of ice which, mingled with dirt and gravel, covered the street.

“Come out from in front of that glass door,” the boy shouted, “and let me have a shot at yer! Aw, yer don’t dare to! Yer ’re scared to!”

And Mr. Fernald, not being a true sportsman, had to admit to himself that he was scared to. He gazed at the boy a moment or two, and then went slowly inside. The boy set up a derisive yell, showing that the victory remained with the Child of Darkness, as it frequently does.

His experience of one evening in the settlement library made Fernald anxious

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to see more of the work. He returned on the following Thursday, but a little later than the time of his first visit. It was half-past seven, and the settlement was in full swing. Loud whoops and yells, combined with noise as of a herd of buffaloes, indicated that a basketball game was in progress in the basement gymnasium. The rumble and crash of a bowling alley were partly drowned by the cries from a back room, where various minor games were being enjoyed. The two library assistants, Miss Grant and Miss French, were dispensing books in the room near the entrance.

Fernald had just taken his coat off when Mr. Flaherty, the janitor, beckoned him to the door of the library by the nonchalant method of standing in the door and throwing his chin in the air with a series of short jerks. When Fernald went

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across the room to find what was wanted, Mr. Flaherty drew him mysteriously into the passage.

“ Say, I guess yer got into some trouble here last week, did n’t yer? ”

“ Trouble? No; I don’t remember any trouble.”

“ Did n’t yer put a feller out, or something? ”

“ Oh, yes; I forgot. I did put a boy out. What’s the matter — is he back again? ”

“ Him? No. The old man’s here, though. Been waitin’ for an hour. Says he’s going to have the law on yer.”

Fernald became interested.

“ Where is he? ” he inquired.

“ He’s in here. Been settin’ by the stove, and now he’s gone to sleep. I’ll send him out to yer. But don’t yer worry about no law. Godfrey! I’ve had

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more 'n forty of 'em goin' to have the law on me."

"I'm not worried," Fernald assured him, and the other departed in search of the wrathful parent.

This person soon appeared in the form of a short, stout man with a straggly yellow moustache and a very red face. He had enormously long arms, so that his hat, which he carried in one hand, hung nearly on a level with his ankles. He was blinking at the lights, and was plainly more than half asleep. Also it was evident that the wrath had gone out of him. He looked inquiringly at Fernald, as though the librarian, not he, were seeking the interview. He continued to blink, until at last Fernald had to begin the conversation.

"You wanted to see me? Something about your son?"

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“ Oh, yes. Say, he come home, an’ he says you put him outer here.”

“ Yes, I did,” replied Fernald; “ that was a week ago to-night. And if I had been here two weeks ago, and had had a cow-hide, I would have given him a good licking. He needs one.”

The man looked greatly astonished, but said nothing, so the librarian continued:

“ I put him out last week for banging three little boys over the heads with a magazine. I had been watching him for ten minutes. He does n’t come in here to play in the gymnasium — which is what he needs — nor to read. He comes into the library every week just to raise the devil. This was the first time he had ever touched a book — when he picked up one to lambaste these boys with it. And two weeks ago he stuck his foot out when one of the women who had charge of the

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library was passing the table, and she tripped and fell flat, with an armful of books. If he wants to come back and behave, he may, but he can't, come otherwise."

"He says you choked him," remarked the man.

"He lies," said Fernald. "I took him by the collar and put him out — that's all. He was quite able, as soon as I let him go, to run into the street and pick up half a dozen lumps of ice, and swear at me, and dare me to come out from in front of the glass door, so he could have the pleasure of breaking my face without any risk of breaking the glass."

"Oh, well," the man returned, "it's all right then. As soon as I see you, I knew it was all right."

Fernald was somewhat mystified at the impression he had made. He was not

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especially tremendous physically, and although he came clad in the armor of righteousness on this particular occasion, he had no delusions about the effect that kind of armor is likely to have on a man of this sort. But the father of the boy went on to explain:

“ Say, yer know, I did n’t know but it was some of these here kids that had been pickin’ on him. I would n’t stand for that, yer know. But soon ’s I see you I knew it was all right. Say, he ain’t got no business here, anyhow. I told him so. I don’t want him to come. It ain’t a fit place.”

And the man departed, wishing the librarian good-night. Fernald was thoroughly resigned to the idea of the boy not coming any more, but he could not help smiling at the idea that it was n’t a fit place. Graham House, the pet charity of a large and prosperous church, had

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been described in the words that its officers might have used of some particularly obnoxious saloon or gambling joint. He imagined how the Rev. Alexander Lambeth, who came over once or twice a week to smile around the place, clerically — how he would look at hearing one of the residents of the neighborhood describe it as not “a fit place” for his son to visit in the evening.

Fernald went back into the library room. It was crowded with children, and the two librarians had their hands full. One of them was charging books at the desk; the other was making desperate endeavors to get the books in the cases in some sort of order, to find certain volumes which some of the children wished, to keep the children fairly quiet, and, in general, to regulate the discipline of the place.

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There were no particularly ill-behaved youngsters — one or two who were pretending to look at the “ picture papers ” at the table, in reality were merely waiting for a chance to get into a scuffle, or in some other way to “ put the liberry on the bum.”

The children’s room at the central library was a quieter place. It was in a much quieter part of the town; the impressive architecture (impressive to children, at least), spacious rooms, and other accessories produced a more typical “ library atmosphere.”

Here, the fact that their feet were on their native heath, the familiar noises of wagons and clanging trolley cars outside, and the hubbub of the gymnasium below, all conspired to make the children a little more restless.

Fernald listened to Miss Grant, who sat at the desk with fifteen girls and boys

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and one or two older persons around her. The older ones were parents or friends who lived in the neighborhood and frequented the library. Miss Grant was discharging the books as they were returned, charging new ones, and incidentally acting as literary adviser and bureau of information.

“ Is this the one you want — ‘ The Half-back ’ ? It has n’t been discharged — who brought this in? Oh, you did — you ’re returning it? You must n’t take the card out till I have stamped it. And this is the book you want to take? ”

A voice from the rear of the crowd:
“ No, ’m, that ’s mine.”

Another voice: “ ’T ain’t neither, teacher, it ’s mine; she promised it to me last Choosday.”

The first voice: “ Oh, you big — I did n’t do nothin’ of the sort, teacher! ”

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A man, elbowing his way to the front, and relying on the fascinations of his dyed moustache and hat tilted to one side: "Say, jus' gimme this, will yer?"

While Miss Grant is charging the book, he leans over her confidentially:

"Say, don't you or that other young lady belong to the Order of the Golden Bazoo? Don't yer? Say, that's too bad — we're goin' to have a little dance to-morrer night at the Red Men's hall. We'd be glad to have yer come. Say, you can come anyway — I can get yer in all right. Yer can meet me at the drugstore on the corner, here, and I'll —"

A small girl with a red tam-o'shanter, interrupting: "Teacher, me an' Minnie Leboskey just took out these books — this is mine — 'The Birds' Chris'mas Carol' and this is Minnie's — 'Sarter Resortus' "

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an' Minnie has read it hundreds of times, an' she says she don't want it again, an' please, teacher, this here is a kid's book, an' I don't want it, an' will yer give me somethin' for my mother, she says she's read the one you sent her last week, an' can she take the White House Cook Book, too, on the same card? "

A tall and very resolute-looking woman, with three books under her arm: "Have you got 'The Leopard's Spots' in this library? I want my son to read it. He has just finished 'The Clansman,' but he has never read 'The Leopard's Spots.' "

Miss Grant: "Why, how old is he? "

The resolute-looking woman, presenting cherubic-faced urchin: "This is him — he 'll be twelve next April."

Miss Grant: "I 'm sure we have some other books that he 'll like better than 'The Leopard's Spots.' That is not a

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child's book — there is a copy at the central library, but it is not kept in the children's room. Would n't you like — ”

The resolute-looking woman: “ No, I would n't. I know what I want. I 'm his mother, and I guess I know what 's what. You need n't try to dictate to me. Have you got it here or have n't you? That 's all I want to know. I can't find it over there on those shelves.”

Miss Grant: “ No; we have not.”

The woman: “ All right, then, I 'll go somewhere else — for he 's goin' to read that book, whether or no.”

A young lady, an acquaintance of Miss Grant, who thinks she is doing a little slumming: “ Oh, Miss Grant, how do you do? I promised that I 'd come and help you, you know. How perfectly delightful this is — only some boys on the corner threw snowballs at Jean and he would n't

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bring the automobile nearer than the next block — he 's waiting there now, and he 's terribly peeved. Now, what shall I do — shall I sit down here and help you? ”

A small boy: “ Say, teacher, come over here an' make this feller give me my book.”

Another small boy: “ Aw, I ain't got his book.”

First small boy: “ Yes, yer have, too! ”

The other small boy: “ No, I ain't — ”

His remarks end in a yelp as the elbow of the first boy goes home in his ribs. The two clinch, and fall over a settee, from which they are pulled up and separated by Mr. Fernald. The young lady in search of slumming experiences observes that another small boy is experimenting with a penful of red ink, while Miss Grant's back is turned, to see how far he can flip the ink. The young lady

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decides she will go and see if her chauffeur is in any further trouble, and she departs hastily, assuring the librarian that she will return soon. She does not reappear, however.

A youth, apparently a butcher's assistant, wearing a blue frock, and carrying a slice of meat (for which some family is indignantly waiting): "Say, miss, my grandmother wanted me to get her a book called — say, it had a funny name, it was 'It Did n't Use to Be,' or something like that. Have you got it?"

Miss Grant: "Yes, I think so. You go over to Miss French — the lady across the room there, and ask her to see if 'It Never Can Happen Again' is on the shelves."

The youth: "That was it, I knew it was something like that."

A severe-looking woman, about thirty-

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eight years old: "Good evening. Have you ever read this book?"

She exhibits a copy of "Barrack Room Ballads," and does not wait for Miss Grant to reply. "I have not read the whole of it—I only looked into it here and there. It ought not be in any library—it is full of the most disgusting profanity. You ought to know about it, and you ought to withdraw it from the shelves immediately."

Katie Finnegan, aged fifteen, leaning heavily on Miss Grant's left shoulder, and whispering into Miss Grant's left ear: "Teacher, are you goin' to let me walk home with you to-night?"

Maggie Burke, aged thirteen, leaning on Miss Grant's right shoulder, and whispering into Miss Grant's right ear: "Say, Miss Grant, I think your hat is just lovely."

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A serious-faced man, evidently a workman in his best clothes: "Have n't you got the Encyclopædia Britannica here? I can't find it on those tables."

A girl of twelve: "Teacher, I want Tolstoi's 'Little Women.'"

A deeply irritated man: "Look here, I'd like to know what this means! D'ye see this postal? Well, look there: 'Please return Evans's 'A Sailor's Log' which is charged on your card. The fine amounts to twenty cents.' I ain't never had no book outer this place!"

Miss Grant: "Perhaps you took it from the central library, or one of the other branches?"

The irritated one: "No, I did n't neither. I ain't never had no books outer no library!"

His companion, another man, with views on capital and labor: "Aw, it's just

BY-WAYS AND HEDGES

one of Carnegie's games to get money out of yer."

The irritated man: "Well, he won't get no money outer me."

Miss Grant, who has read the name "John Smith" on the other side of the post-card: "Perhaps this came to you by mistake — it was meant for someone else of the same name, maybe."

The irritated man: "Well, you can keep it — I don't want it, anyhow."

He and his friend depart, much pleased at having baffled Carnegie this time.

Miss French, the other librarian, laying a very dirty slip of paper on Miss Grant's desk: "What do you suppose this means? There is a boy waiting for the book, but we have n't anything about shingling — I've looked in the catalogue twice."

Miss Grant read the note, which ran: "plees give barer why not shingel the

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

house and oblige Mrs. Coffey 2795 North Street."

Miss Grant: "Oh, yes — just write her a note, will you, Miss French? Tell her we have n't any of Frank Danby's books. She wants 'Let the Roof Fall In,' you know."

A small boy: "Have you any books about explosions? Mother says she wants one about the Pan-American explosion."

Another small boy: "Have n't you got the Mutt and Jeff book yet? When are you goin' to get it?"

A small girl: "Please, can I keep this book on how to bring up parrots till next week?"

The janitor of the building: "Closin' time in five minutes, Miss."

Two women: "Oh, what's he putting out the lights for? I have n't found a book yet!"

MULCH

MULCH

TOWARD spring the books on gardening begin to come into the library, and I look them over with fresh enthusiasm. Mrs. Bunkum is no longer my favorite author in this field, but her sister writers are very dear to my heart.

There is Mrs. Reginald Creasus. I seize her latest volume with the eagerness of a child. I like to see the pictures of the new marble bench which she has imported from Pompeii and set up at the end of the Rose Walk. Then she usually has a new sculptured group — a fountain, or some other little trifle by Rodin or St. Gaudens, which looks so well amidst the Japanese iris.

After gazing at these illustrations for

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

a while, I go home and observe the red woodshed, and I declare it looks altogether different. It is wonderful how discontented with your lot you can get by reading Mrs. Creasus's books on gardening. Sometimes I think that I am making a mistake in voting the Republican ticket, year after year. Mr. Debs may be right, after all.

This year Mrs. Creasus calls her volume "The Simple Garden." From it I gathered that anyone who knows anything at all will not pass the summer without an Abyssinian hibiscus unfolding its lovely blooms somewhere on the place. They are absolutely necessary, in fact. You have to be careful with them — when you plant them, that is. The fertilizer which they require has to be fetched from the island of Ascension. I calculated that by going without food or clothes for two years I

MULCH

could just about buy and support one of them.

I wish Mrs. Creasus would write a book about the complicated garden. I should like to see it.

Just as I had bought a garden hose, along came Mrs. Creasus's book, remarking casually that it is well to have the whole garden laid out with underground water-pipes, placed at least six feet below the surface, to avoid frost. Two or three private reservoirs are, of course, an essential. I wonder what Mrs. Creasus keeps in these reservoirs. I suppose it is champagne, but I wouldn't like to ask.

Scotch gardeners are going out, she says. The Chinese are the only kind, although they demand — and get — forty to fifty dollars more per month than the others. I made a note to employ no more Scotch-

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY

men, and then I looked to see what she had to say about sweet-peas.

She was ever so enthusiastic about them. No family should be without sweet-peas, she said. You dig a trench, and you put in four or five different kinds of dressing, separated by layers of earth, and then you plant the peas, and as fast as they come up you keep discouraging them by putting more earth and things on top, and then you build a trellis for them to run on, sinking the posts not less than four feet, and there you are.

Only — you must mulch them.

Mulch! That struck me as a pleasant word. It had a nice squishy sound about it. I thought it would be so nice, on hot evenings, to go around mulching and mulching.

I went to the dictionary to look it up and find out what it meant, but just at

MULCH

that minute General Bumpus came into my office. He was interested to see Mrs. Creasus's book lying open on my desk — he is president of the library board, and he is another gardening enthusiast.

“Going to have some sweet-peas?” he asked, observing the picture.

“Yes,” I replied, “I thought I would.”

“Well,” he said, “that’s all right. Only you must mulch them good and plenty.”

“Is that necessary?” I inquired, looking him straight in the eye.

“Oh, yes — absolutely.”

Before we could say anything more about it, someone came in to tell the general that Mrs. Bumpus said the horses were uneasy, and that she wished he would come out. He went away, and then Miss Davis came to get me — there was a man in the reading-room, who wanted

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me to give him permission to break some rule or other. So I forgot all about the sweet-peas until I was on my way home. Then I stepped in at the seed shop to get the peas.

Philip Morris was there, buying a lawn-mower. He had paid for it, and was starting toward the door, when he saw me.

“Hullo! Buying sweet-peas?”

“Yes. Have you ever raised any?”

“Tried to. One year they did n’t come up at all, and another year the cut-worms got ’em, and another they just sort of sickened and died. But I did n’t mulch ’em — that was the trouble.”

“Well, why *did n’t* you mulch ’em?”

“Why, I would have, but — George! that’s my car! Good-night!”

And he rushed out.

I did not like to display my ignorance

MULCH

before the dealer, so I merely took the peas and started up the street with them. Inside of two minutes I met Miss Abernathy. She has a marvelous flower-garden. I stopped her and told her of my purchase.

“Oh, you’re going to have sweet-peas! I envy you. I’ve never been very successful with them.”

“What happened to them?”

“I don’t know. They seemed to get disappointed — they need very rich soil.”

“Maybe,” I suggested tentatively, “you did n’t mulch ’em.”

“Oh, that does n’t make any difference.”

“Does n’t it?”

“Not a bit.”

And she bade me good evening, and passed on.

When I reached home and had eaten

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dinner, I told Jane that I was going to plant some sweet-peas. I described the process to her. She was very much interested, and offered to help. I dug the trench and put in the peas. I thought some bushes might do instead of Mrs. Creasus's trellis.

"Now," I said, "all they need is to be mulched."

"To be what?" asked Jane.

"Mulched. You always have to mulch sweet-peas; that is, Mrs. Creasus and General Bumpus, and Philip Morris say so, but Miss Abernathy thinks not."

"How do you do it?"

"Jane, do you mean to say that you do not know how to mulch?"

"Of course I don't. How do you do it?"

I felt in my pocket.

"Can't you roll me a cigarette? There's

MULCH

some paper and tobacco in the house — on my desk.”

Jane went dutifully away, and when she returned, I lighted the cigarette.

“There,” I said, “they’re all mulched — I did it with this hoe.”

“Is *that* what it means?”

All this happened in April, and now it is August, and the sweet-peas still maintain a somewhat sullen appearance. I wonder if Miss Abernathy was right, after all. Perhaps I did wrong to mulch them, — at least, so savagely.

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

MR. ANTHONY GOOCH, brother of the well-known librarian of East Caraway, owns one of the choicest private libraries it has ever been my good luck to see. I spent an evening with him recently and inspected his books. Mr. Anthony Gooch was highly amused at the account of his brother's literary zoölogical annex, which I wrote for the "Boston Transcript."

"Percival has tacked that barn on his library," he said, "and filled it with all those absurd animals — not one-half of which are genuine. Poor Percy! The dealers have pulled his leg unmercifully. And he spends all his evenings and holidays shoveling hay to those preposterous

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elephants, and wandering around in that menagerie — I'm afraid the old fellow is getting dotty. Why, what do you think he told me last week? ”

I had not the least idea, and I said so.

“ Why, he is negotiating with a London dealer for the oysters mentioned in ‘ The Walrus and the Carpenter ’! You remember them, of course? ”

And Mr. Gooch, leaning back in his chair and waving the stem of his long pipe in time with the beat of Lewis Carroll's exquisite verses, repeated:

“ ‘ But four young Oysters hurried up,
All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat —
And this was odd, because, you know,
They had n't any feet.

“ ‘ Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four, — ’

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

"I told him that he was being cheated, for the poem distinctly states (see stanza 18, lines 5 and 6) that the Walrus and the Carpenter ate all the oysters. But he replied that perhaps these were some of the Elder Oysters, for in the poem it says:

" "The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head —
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed."

"It is useless to argue with him," continued Mr. Anthony Gooch, "and if his trustees will let him spend the money, I suppose I ought not mind. Still I do hate to think of the name of Gooch being connected with a fraudulent collection."

I agreed that it was distressing, and remarked that I thought it curious that

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one brother should be a collector and the other have no interest in that kind of hobby. For Anthony Gooch's library is remarkably free from all items that appeal merely to the bibliomaniac. His books are beautiful, but they are to be read, and Mr. Gooch has read them. He owns no unopened copies, nor any such nonsense. My host smiled.

"Well, of course I do not go in for fakes, and I certainly do not care to act as keeper to a lot of crocodiles, and flounders, and jackdaws, and other livestock, as Percival does. Still, my little museum — you have never seen it? Come this way."

Mr. Gooch led me to a door at the right of the fireplace, between two bookcases. He opened the door, turned on the lights, and we entered a small room. I exclaimed with astonishment, for we

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

stood in an arsenal — or, rather, an armory.

The walls were lined with weapons. Stands of arms were in the corners, and a number of flags and banners hung from the ceiling. The weapons were of every variety and period. Old spears and battle-axes, stone hatchets, bows and sheaves of arrows — these were mingled with modern rifles, automatic pistols, and bowie knives. Daggers of a dozen patterns hung on the walls or lay on the tables. One or two ancient pieces of artillery — culverins and drakes, I fancy — were in a corner, together with a quick-firing gun from some modern man-of-war.

“These,” said Mr. Gooch, looking me in the eye, very seriously, “are absolutely genuine — every one of them. And not one but has figured in some scene in literature. I have spent fifteen years in as-

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sembling this collection, and — well, I prize it highly. That is one of the reasons why it disgusts me to have my brother Percival waste his time over that ridiculous aggregation of animals, so many of which are sheer frauds. It tends to bring my collection of weapons under suspicion, and I do not need to say that I cannot bear to have anyone doubt the absolute authenticity of my treasures. If you feel any doubt about them I wish you would say so now, and we will go back to the library.”

But I told Mr. Gooch that suspicion was a trait foreign to my nature.

“Long ago,” I said, “I took the advice of the White Queen in ‘Through the Looking-Glass,’ and practised believing impossible things for half an hour every day. Like her, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

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“Then I have no hesitation in showing you my collection,” remarked Mr. Gooch. “Look at this sword—it is the envenomed rapier of Laertes, dipped in an unction which he bought of a mountebank. Be careful not to touch the point—I think some of the poison lingers on it now, and it has already been responsible for two—no, three deaths. You remember that Hamlet used it to kill the king, after it had wounded both him and Laertes in the fencing bout.”

I put down the rapier gingerly, and inquired about a flint-lock pistol which lay on the table near at hand. Mr. Gooch told me that it was the weapon owned by Madame Defarge, through which she came to her death.

“And what was probably worse, from her point of view,” added the collector, “she was thus unavoidably detained from

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her front seat at the guillotine, on that day of days, when she hoped to see the Marquis of Evremond lose his life. Some one has said that the whole French Revolution seemed to have been brought about so Madame Defarge might have her revenge — so, of course, the blow was a severe one to her. This pistol exploded while she was struggling with Miss Pross in the empty house, and the explosion killed her and deafened Miss Pross. Even then the tumbril was carrying Sydney Carton to the guillotine.”

“Your relics are rather gruesome,” I observed.

“I pride myself that there are more horrors comprised in this small room than in most of its size,” said Mr. Gooch. “But they are not all connected with tragedies. Here, for instance, is the mace which the White Knight used in his battle with the

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

Red Knight, and I have also — up there on the wall — his sword — made of a lath, you see. Still, weapons are naturally instruments of crime, or, at any rate, of violence, and some very notorious murders are commemorated here.”

He picked up a long, blood-stained knife.

“With this,” he said, “Markheim killed the shopkeeper. One of the very finest murders in literature, in my opinion. You recall the circumstances: Christmas Day, the two men alone in the shop — ”

“I do indeed,” I replied, willing to show my familiarity with Stevenson’s wonderful tale, “and I remember the terrible moments that followed — the murderer alone with the dead man, the silence, the ticking of the clocks, the man who knocked on the outside door, and all the rest of it.”

Mr. Gooch replaced the knife and drew

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my attention to a shield and a long spear which hung on the wall. These, he said, belonged to a "Fuzzy-Wuzzy" — they were a "coffin-'eaded shield an' shovel-spear," the implements for a 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush. Near them hung an old flintlock musket. It was a perfect wreck — the stock worm-eaten, and the lock and barrel covered with rust.

"It was never used to kill anything more dangerous than a squirrel or a wild goose," said my host; "yet its original owner was nearly arrested for carrying it on one occasion. Surely you can guess who that owner was."

I guessed Rip Van Winkle, and Mr. Gooch said that was correct.

"It does n't improve a musket or a man to lie out on the mountains day and night for twenty years," he added.

Then he showed me Othello's sword of

A BOOKMAN'S ARMORY

Spain, "of the ice-brook's temper," with which the Moor smote himself, as once in Aleppo he smote a malignant and a turban'd Turk.

"This box," said Mr. Gooch, "contains one of my greatest prizes — nothing less than the dagger which led Macbeth to Duncan's sleeping chamber —"

"But it was an 'air-drawn dagger' — it was imaginary," I began.

And then the old story about the man and his mongoose recurred to me, and I stopped. I looked in the box, and, of course, found it empty. The collector of weapons laughed and seemed greatly delighted with his little joke. I judged that he was accustomed to play it on every visitor.

"What is this bottle? It seems out of place here."

"Not at all," replied Mr. Gooch; "it is

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Falstaff's pocket pistol. This cane once belonged to Mr. Wackford Squeers, but it was used on only one occasion, and then against the owner himself, by Nicholas Nickleby."

He then showed me a sword broken near the hilt.

"It was Henry Esmond's. He broke it when he denied the Prince, and heaped reproaches upon him for going dangling after Beatrix, when the opportunity of his life was at hand. Little the Prince cared! He deigned, a few moments later, to cross swords with Esmond, and Frank used this broken blade to strike up their weapons. It was such a condescension! Esmond knew the Prince to be worthless, and he had just been insulting him in every way he could think. But he was of the sacred blood of the Stuarts — enough for any Jacobite. You will find a full account

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of it in the novel, if you care to refresh your memory. This is a cigar-cutter's knife — a curious weapon, is n't it? Carmen used it to slash the face of the woman she quarreled with — she cut a neat St. Andrew's cross on her enemy's cheek. That led to her subsequent arrest by Don José, the escape at which he connived, and all the train of events which followed. This is the knife that Don José killed Carmen with."

"How did you get all these weapons?" I asked him.

"Oh, in various ways. It requires a great deal of patience, some money, and some imagination. I traveled for three or four years, but since then I have had to employ agents. Some authors would almost fill this room by themselves, if I cared to collect all the weapons for which they are responsible. See all those spears

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and broadswords — that is my Sir Thomas Malory corner. Walter Scott covered almost that entire wall — spears, claymores, daggers, battleaxes and pistols. I could not get the sword of Saladin — that, like some other valuable pieces, is owned by a Virtuoso, of whom you may have heard. This sword was used by Rudolf Rassendyll — he employed it in freeing the prisoner of Zenda. A revolver would have been quicker, probably, but not half so picturesque. I was glad to get that sword, but I soon had to stop buying the mass of cutlery that came into the market shortly after it was forged. I could have filled my house with it. Poor weapons they were, mostly. See those rapiers over the fireplace — they are of the finest temper, and came from Alexandre Dumas. The one on the left, of somewhat the same shape, was used by A Gentleman of

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France. That spear was carried by the squire of Sir Nigel Loring when he rode into Spain at the head of the White Company. There is the good broadsword of young Lochinvar, and this is the sword with which Horatius held the bridge in the brave days of old."

"The one with which he killed the Lord of Luna?"

"Precisely. How does it go?"

"Through teeth, and skull, and helmet,
So fierce a thrust he sped
The good sword stood a handbreadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head."

"No one does anything like that now. Those were the days!"

"They were, certainly. The two swords next to Horatius's — who owned them?"

"Lord Barnard and Little Musgrave. You know the old ballad?"

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And Mr. Gooch quoted again:

“ ‘ The first stroke little Musgrave struck,
He hurt Lord Barnard sore;
The next stroke that Lord Barnard struck,
Little Musgrave never struck more.’ ”

Then the collector showed me a rifle of modern pattern.

“ The regular rifle of the British army twenty years ago. This belonged to Private Stanley Ortheris. He took it with him that day he went out to look for a native deserter who was making things unpleasant by night for the old regiment. Ortheris had his two companions with him, and while they waited Learoyd told the story ‘ On Greenhow Hill.’ At its end, the deserter appeared and Ortheris ended his career at long range. ‘ Mayhap there was a lass tewed up wi’ him, too,’ opined Learoyd.”

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I nodded, for I liked the story well.

"Here is the pistol," said Mr. Gooch, "that was found by the side of Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, who struck a streak of bad luck on the 23d of November, 1850, and handed in his checks on the 7th of December, 1850."

Then I asked about a hammer that lay among other objects on the table.

"It is not a weapon, exactly," admitted Mr. Gooch, "but it belonged to Adam Bede. He used it in making a coffin, the night his father was drowned. The musket is the one with which Carver Doone shot Lorna in the church. That peculiar machine in the corner? It does n't look earthly, does it? As a matter of fact, it is a heat ray apparatus which was employed by the Martians in the War of the Worlds."

We moved around the room slowly, Mr.

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Gooch sometimes pointing to weapons which hung high above our heads, and sometimes taking them down so I could examine them closely. In this more satisfactory fashion he now showed me a remarkable axe. The haft was of rhinoceros horn, wound with copper wire. This handle was over a yard long. The head was of steel. As I had suspected, the axe had belonged to Umslopogaas, the Zulu warrior. With this axe he had terrorized the French cook Alphonse, and with it he fought his great fight at the head of the stairway. It had numerous nicks in the horn handle — each nick representing a man killed with it in battle.

“Here is another knife which figured in a murder,” said Mr. Gooch. “Tess killed Alec D’Urberville with it. And this is the unsheathed sword that lay between Tristram and Iseult.”

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On a shelf in a corner was a piece of some red stone. I inquired about it, remarking that it did not seem to belong to the collection.

“No, it does not,” Mr. Gooch agreed, “but it served very effectively on a certain occasion. That was the meeting of the scientific society on the Stanislow. If I can quote correctly, the incident is described as follows:

“ ‘Then Peleg Jones of Angels raised a point of order, when
A chunk of old red sandstone took him in the abdomen —
And he smiled a kind of sickly smile, and curled up on the floor,
And the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.’

“I remember now,” said I, “it was the beginning of a serious battle.”

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“ Yes; events followed fast and furious —

“ ‘ In less time than it takes to tell it, every member did engage

In a battle with those remnants of a paleozoic age,

And the way they hurled those fossils in their anger was a sin —

Till the skull of an old mammoth caved the head of Thompson in.’ ”

Mr. Gooch then showed me Bob Acres' dueling pistols. They gave no signs of having been used, and it is doubtful if they would have been very deadly at forty paces — Bob's favorite fighting distance. Here was also the cross-bow, with which the Ancient Mariner killed the albatross. I found, hanging from a hook, two curious weapons which resembled light darts, or spears. My host reached them down for me, and I looked them over closely.

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Their composition was apparent — the halves of a pair of scissors had been tied to two wands.

“ They look much more harmless than Bob Acres’ pistols, do they not? As a matter of fact, they were used in a duel, and one of them killed its man. The duel was fought in Edinburgh Castle between two French prisoners, — one of whom was St. Ives.”

“ And the lasso that hangs above them? ”

“ Employed in a tournament by a Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur’s Court, — until Merlin stole it. This is the sword with which Sergeant Troy displayed his dexterity before Bathsheba Everdene. And this blade you have heard celebrated in song a good many times — it is the Sword of Bunker Hill. And with this Miles Standish stirred the posset. Here

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is the revolver with which Sherlock Holmes used to amuse himself in his room on Baker street — sitting in his chair, and making a patriotic ‘V. R.’ in bullet pocks on the wall, much to the annoyance of the good Dr. Watson. These daggers are rather odd — four of them, and two swords, you see. They came from ‘The Critic,’ where the two Nieces draw their two daggers to strike Whiskerandos, the two Uncles point their swords at Whiskerandos, and he draws two daggers and holds them to the two Nieces’ bosoms. So they would have stood forever, if the Beefeater had n’t come in and commanded them, in the queen’s name, to drop their weapons. There’s the Beefeater’s halberd, too. Doubtless you’ve wondered at this naval gun. It fired the shot that did the business for the ‘Haliotis,’ and gave Kipling a chance to air his knowledge of

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engines and machinery in general. You can read about it in 'The Devil and the Deep Sea.' This sword is in its sheath, you see,

‘His sword was in its sheath,
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.’

“I’ve plenty of swords — here’s the one that pierced the Master of Ballantrae, when he and his brother fought together by candle-light. This pretty little pair of scissors? They helped in the Rape of the Lock. This stone-headed club is my oldest specimen — it belonged to Ab — you know his story, no doubt? And the big axe was carried by the Executioner when the Queen of Hearts went about shouting, ‘Off with their heads!’”

“That is a beautiful dagger,” I remarked.

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“Is n’t it? It was brought by some Italian twins to a village in Missouri, where it had an exciting history. Look at the finger prints in blood on the handle. They betrayed a murderer, and he was denounced in court by Pudd’nhead Wilson.”

We had finished our circuit of the room, and it was time for me to bid Mr. Gooch good-night. I started to thank him for showing me his collection, but he interrupted.

“Oh, that’s all right; but,” he added, laying his hand on my shoulder in a paternal fashion, “one last request: if you write it up for the ‘*Transcript*,’ don’t try to be funny! I do hate to have books, and libraries, and literature treated flippantly. Now, I read your column — oh! very often — ”

“No!”

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“ Yes, I do,” he persisted, “ I *really* do! After I have finished the Genealogical Department, of course, and all those other fellows — The Bee-Keeper, and The Bishop Afloat, and all the rest of 'em, I read The Librarian *frequently*.”

I blushed slightly.

“ And I wish,” continued my host, “ that you would treat my collection seriously.”

“ Mr. Gooch,” I promised, “ I will be as solemn as — as — oh, as your brother's annual reports. I can say no more than that.”

And we shook hands on it.

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